AIRMONT 60c

William Shakespeare

A Play

KING JOHN

William Shakespeare

TO THE READER

THIS FIGURE, THAT THOU HERE SEEST PUT,
IT WAS FOR GENTLE SHAKESPEARE CUT;
WHEREIN THE GRAVER HAD A STRIFE
WITH NATURE, TO OUT-DO THE LIFE:
O, COULD HE BUT HAVE DRAWN HIS WIT
AS WELL IN BRASS, AS HE HATH HIT
HIS FACE; THE PRINT WOULD THEN SURPASS
ALL, THAT WAS EVER WRIT IN BRASS.
BUT, SINCE HE CANNOT, READER, LOOK,
NOT ON HIS PICTURE, BUT HIS BOOK.

BEN: JONSON.

The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man and nature. Without denying man's need for Grace, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods," values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now. Man himself was seen no longer as wholly vile and depraved, incapable even of desiring goodness, but rather as Shakespeare saw him in *Hamlet*:

> *"What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason!*
> *how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how*
> *express and admirable! in action how like an angel!*
> *in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world!*
> *the paragon of animals!"*

It was, indeed, a very stirring time to be alive in. It was a time like spring, when promise, opportunity, challenge, and growth appeared where none had been dreamed of before. Perhaps this is why there is so much poetry of springtime in the age of Shakespeare.

Edited with Introduction and Suggestions for Study by Dr. Beryl Rowlan

Notes Edited by Lucy Mabry Fitzpatrick

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AIRMONT SHAKESPEARE CLASSICS SERIES

King John

By

William Shakespeare

General Introduction by Dr. David G. Pitt

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An Airmont Classic
specially selected for the Airmont Library
from the immortal literature of the world

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PREFACE

For the Airmont series of plays by William Shakespeare, we have chosen a text that we believe more nearly preserves the flavor of the old Shakespearean English than do those of more modernized versions.

In a popular-priced paperback edition, it is almost impossible to include a complete compilation of notes because of the limitations of the format. We suggest that the reader refer to the following excellent textbooks for additional material: The New Variorum (Cambridge and Arden editions); the Globe edition edited by W. G. Clark and W. A. Wright (1866); the Oxford edition edited by W. J. Craig (1891); and the editions by G. L. Kittredge (1936). Also, the following books will be helpful to a better understanding of Shakespeare: Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare, First Series* (London, 1933), Gerald Sanders, *A Shakespeare Primer* (New York and Toronto, 1945); J. Dover Wilson, *The Essential Shakespeare* (London, 1930; New York, 1932).

Dr. David G. Pitt received his B.A. degree from Mt. Allison University in New Brunswick, and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Toronto. Since 1949, he has been in the English Department of Memorial University of Newfoundland and Professor of English there since 1962. His publications include articles on literary and educational subjects, and editorial work on Shakespeare.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare: His Life, Times, and Theatre

HIS LIFE

The world's greatest poet and playwright, often called the greatest Englishman, was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in the year 1564. The exact date of his birth is uncertain, but an entry in the *Stratford Parish Register* gives his baptismal date as April 26. Since children were usually baptized two or three days after birth, it is reasonable to assume that he was born on or about April 23—an appropriate day, being the feast of St. George, the patron saint of England.

His father, John Shakespeare, was a glover and dealer in wool and farm products, who had moved to Stratford from Snitterfield, four miles distant, some time before 1552. During his early years in Stratford his business prospered, enabling him to acquire substantial property, including several houses, and to take his place among the more considerable citizens of the town. In 1557 he married Mary, daughter of Robert Arden, a wealthy landowner of Wilmcote, not far from Stratford. Two daughters were born to them before William's birth—Joan, baptized in 1558, and Margaret, baptized in 1562—but both died in infancy. William was thus their third child, though the eldest of those who survived infancy. After him were born Gilbert (1566), another Joan (1569), Anne (1571), Richard (1574), and Edmund (1580).

Very little is positively known (though much is conjectured) about Shakespeare's boyhood and education. We know that for some years after William's birth his father's rise in Stratford society and municipal affairs continued. Many local offices came to him in rapid succession: ale-taster, burgess (a kind of constable), assessor of fines, chamberlain (town

treasurer), high bailiff (a kind of magistrate), alderman (town councilor), and chief alderman in 1571. As the son of a man of such eminence in Stratford, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended the local Grammar School. This he was entitled to do free of charge, his father being a town councilor. No records of the school are extant, so that we do not know how good a pupil he was nor what subjects he studied. It is probable that he covered the usual Elizabethan curriculum: an "A B C book," the catechism in Latin and English, Latin grammar, the translation of Latin authors, and perhaps some Greek grammar and translation as well. But family circumstances appear to have curtailed his formal education before it was complete, for shortly before William reached his fourteenth birthday his father's rising fortunes abruptly passed their zenith.

Although we do not know all the facts, it is apparent that about the year 1578, having gone heavily into debt, John Shakespeare lost two large farms inherited by his wife from her father. Thereafter, he was involved in a series of lawsuits, and lost his post on the Stratford town council. Matters got steadily worse for him, until finally in 1586 he was declared a bankrupt. But by this time the future poet-dramatist was already a family man himself.

In 1582, in the midst of his father's legal and financial crises—and perhaps because of them—Shakespeare married Anne, daughter of Richard Hathaway (recently deceased) of the village of Shottery near Stratford. The *Episcopal Register* for the Diocese of Worcester contains their marriage record, dated November 28, 1582; he was then in his eighteenth year and his wife in her twenty-sixth. On May 26 of the following year the *Stratford Parish Register* recorded the baptism of their first child, Susanna; and on February 2, 1585, the baptism of a twin son and daughter named Hammet and Judith.

These facts are all that are known of Shakespeare's early life. How he supported his family, whether he took up some trade or profession, how long he continued to live in Stratford, we do not know for certain. Tradition and conjecture have

bestowed on him many interim occupations between his marriage and his appearance in London in the early fifteen-nineties: printer, dyer, traveling-player, butcher, soldier, apothecary, thief—it reads like a children's augury-rhyme (when buttons or cherry-stones are read to learn one's fate). Perhaps only the last-named "pursuit" requires some explanation. According to several accounts, one of them appearing in the first *Life* of Shakespeare by Nicholas Rowe (1709), Shakespeare fell into bad company sometime after his marriage, and on several occasions stole deer from the park of Sir Thomas Lucy, a substantial gentleman of Charlecote, near Stratford. According to Rowe:

> For this he was prosecuted by that gentleman, as he thought somewhat too severely; and in order to revenge that ill-usage, he made a ballad upon him . . . and was obliged to leave his business and family in Warwickshire, for some time, and shelter himself in London.

The story has been repeated in varying forms by most subsequent biographers, but its authenticity is doubted by many who repeat it.

Another much more attractive story, which, however, if true, does not necessarily deny the authenticity of Rowe's, is that Shakespeare during the so-called "lost years" was a schoolmaster. This, indeed, appears to be somewhat better substantiated. John Aubrey, seventeenth-century biographer and antiquary, in his *Brief Lives* (1681) declares that he had learned from a theatrical manager, whose father had known Shakespeare, that the dramatist "had been in his younger years a schoolmaster in the country." This may, then, account, in part at least, for the years between his marriage and his arrival in London about the year 1591. It is interesting to note that in two of his early plays Shakespeare includes a schoolmaster among his characters: Holofernes of *Love's Labour's Lost* and Pinch of *The Comedy of Errors*. But let us hope that neither is intended to be Shakespeare's portrait of himself!

However he may have occupied himself in the interim, we know that by 1592 he was already a budding actor and play-

wright in London. In that year Robert Greene in his autobiographical pamphlet *A Groatsworth of Wit*, referring to the young actors and menders of old plays who were, it seemed to him, gaining undeserved glory from the labours of their betters (both by acting their plays and by rewriting them), wrote as follows:

> Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute *Iohannes factotum, is in his owne conceit the onely* Shakescene in a countrey.

"Shakescene" is clearly Shakespeare. The phrase "upstart Crow" probably refers to his country origins and his lack of university education. "Beautified with our feathers" probably means that he uses the other playwrights' words for his own aggrandisement either in plays in which he acts or in those he writes himself. "Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hyde" is a parody of a line in III *Henry VI*, one of the earliest plays ascribed to Shakespeare. And the Latin phrase *Iohannes factotum*, meaning Jack-of-all-trades, suggests that he was at this time engaged in all sorts of theatrical jobs: actor, poet, playwright, and perhaps manager as well.

Greene died shortly after making this scurrilous attack on the young upstart from Stratford, and so escaped the resentment of those he had insulted. But Henry Chettle, himself a minor dramatist, who had prepared Greene's manuscript for the printer, in his *Kind-Harts Dreame* (1592), apologized to Shakespeare for his share in the offence:

> I am as sory as if the original fault had beene my fault, because my selfe have seene his demeanor no lesse civill, than he excelent in the qualitie he professes: Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approoves his Art.

Thus, in very indirect manner and because of an attack upon him by an irascible dying man, we learn that Shakespeare

at this time was in fact held in high regard by "divers of worship," that is, by many of high birth, as an upright, honest young man of pleasant manners and manifest skill as actor, poet, and playwright.

Although Shakespeare by 1593 had written, or written parts of, some five or six plays (I, II, and III *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and perhaps *Titus Andronicus*), it was as a non-dramatic poet that he first appeared in print. *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, long narrative poems, both bearing Shakespeare's name, were published in 1593 and 1594 respectively. But thereafter for the next twenty years he wrote almost nothing but drama. In his early period, 1591 to 1596, in addition to the plays named above he wrote *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Richard II*, and *King John*. Then followed his great middle period, 1596 to 1600, during which he wrote both comedies and history-plays: *The Merchant of Venice*, I and II *Henry IV*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. The period of his great tragedies and the so-called "dark comedies" followed (1600-1608): *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Coriolanus*. The last phase of his career as dramatist, 1608 to 1613, sometimes called "the period of the romances," produced *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, parts of *Henry VIII*, and perhaps parts of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Many other plays were ascribed to him, but it is doubtful that he had a hand in any but those we have named. Long before his death in 1616 his name held such magic for the public that merely to print it on the title page of any play assured its popular acclaim. The "upstart Crow" had come a long way since 1592.

He had come a long way too from the economic straits that may well have driven him to London many years before. We know, for example, from the records of tax assessments

that by 1596 Shakespeare was already fairly well-to-do. This is further borne out by his purchasing in the following year a substantial house known as New Place and an acre of land in Stratford for £60, a sizable sum in those days. In 1602 he made a further purchase of 107 acres at Stratford for £320, and a cottage and more land behind his estate at New Place. But his life during this time was not quite unclouded. His only son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of eleven years, his father in 1601, and his mother in 1608. All three were buried in Stratford. More happily he saw, in 1607, the marriage of his daughter Susanna to Dr. John Hall, an eminent physician of Stratford, and, in the following year, the baptism of his granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall.

Shakespeare's retirement to Stratford appears to have been gradual, but by 1613, if not earlier, he seems to have settled there, though he still went up to London occasionally. Of the last months of his life we know little. We do know that in February, 1616, his second daughter, Judith, married Thomas Quiney. We know that on March 25, apparently already ill, Shakespeare revised and signed his will, among other bequests leaving to his wife his "second best bed with the furniture." A month later he was dead, dying on his fifty-second birthday, April 23, 1616. He was buried in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, on April 26.

HIS TIMES

Shakespeare lived during the English Renaissance, that age of transition that links the Mediaeval and the Modern world. Inheriting the rich traditions of the Middle Ages in art, learning, religion, and politics, rediscovering the great legacies of classical culture, the men of the Renaissance went on to new and magnificent achievements in every phase of human endeavour. No other period in history saw such varied and prolific development and expansion. And the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), Shakespeare's age, was the High Renaissance in England.

Development and expansion—these are the watchwords of

the age, and they apply to every aspect of life, thought, and activity. The universe grew in immensity as men gradually abandoned the old Ptolemaic view of a finite, earth-centered universe, accepting the enormous intellectual challenge of the illimitable cosmos of Copernicus's theory and Galileo's telescope. The earth enlarged, too, as more of its surface was discovered and charted by explorers following the lead of Columbus, Cabot, Magellan, and Vespucci. England itself expanded as explorers and colonizers, such as Frobisher, Davis, Gilbert, Raleigh, Grenville, Drake, and others, carried the English flag into many distant lands and seas; as English trade and commerce expanded with the opening of new markets and new sources of supply; as English sea power grew to protect the trading routes and fend off rivals, particularly Spain, the defeat of whose Invincible Armada in 1588 greatly advanced English national pride at home, and power and prestige abroad.

The world of ideas changed and expanded, too. The rediscovery and reinterpretation of the classics, with their broad and humane view of life, gave a new direction and impetus to secular education. During the Middle Ages theology had dominated education, but now the language, literature, and philosophy of the ancient world, the practical arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and training in morals, manners, and gymnastics assumed the major roles in both school and university—in other words, an education that fitted one for life in the world here and now replaced one that looked rather to the life hereafter. Not that the spiritual culture of man was neglected. Indeed, it took on a new significance, for as life in this world acquired new meaning and value, religion assumed new functions, and new vitality to perform them, as the bond between the Creator and a new kind of creation.

It was, of course, the old creation—man and nature—but it was undergoing great changes. Some of these we have already seen, but the greatest was in man's conception of himself and his place in nature. The Mediaeval view of man was generally not an exalted one. It saw him as more or

less depraved, fallen from Grace as a result of Adam's sin; and the things of this world, which was also "fallen," as of little value in terms of his salvation. Natural life was thought of mainly as a preparation for man's entry into Eternity. But Renaissance thought soon began to rehabilitate man, nature, and the things of this life. Without denying man's need for Grace and the value of the means of salvation provided by the Church, men came gradually to accept the idea that there were "goods", values, "innocent delights" to be had in the world here and now, and that God had given them for man to enjoy. Man himself was seen no longer as wholly vile and depraved, incapable even of desiring goodness, but rather as Shakespeare saw him in *Hamlet*:

> What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

And this is the conception of man that permeates Elizabethan thought and literature. It does not mean that man is incorruptible, immune to moral weakness and folly. Shakespeare has his villains, cowards, and fools. But man is none of these by nature; they are distortions of the true form of man. Nature framed him for greatness, endowed him with vast capacities for knowledge, achievement, and delight, and with aspirations that may take him to the stars. "O brave new world, That has such people in 't!"

The chief object of man's aspiring mind is now the natural world, whose "wondrous architecture," says Marlowe's Tamburlaine, our souls strive ceaselessly to comprehend, "Still climbing after knowledge infinite." Hamlet, too, speaks of "this goodly frame, the earth . . . this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire." No longer the ruins of a fallen paradise and the devil's, nature is seen as man's to possess, her beauty and wonder to be sought after and enjoyed, her energies to be controlled and used—as Bacon expressed it, "for the glory of the Creator and the relief of man's estate."

It was, indeed, a very stirring time to be alive in. New vistas were breaking upon the human mind and imagination everywhere. It was a time like spring, when promise, opportunity, challenge and growth appeared where none had been dreamed of before. Perhaps this is why there is so much poetry of springtime in the age of Shakespeare.

HIS THEATRE

There were many theatres, or playhouses, in Shakespeare's London. The first was built in 1576 by James Burbage and was called the *Theatre.* It was built like an arena, with a movable platform at one end, and had no seats in the pit, but had benches in the galleries that surrounded it. It was built of wood, and cost about £200. Other famous playhouses of Shakespeare's time, for the most part similarly constructed, included the Curtain, the Bull, the Rose, the Swan, the Fortune, and, most famous of them all, the Globe. It was built in 1599 by the sons of James Burbage, and it was here that most of Shakespeare's plays were performed. Since more is known about the Globe than most of the others, I shall use it as the basis of the brief account that follows of the Elizabethan playhouse.

As its name suggests the Globe was a circular structure (the second Globe, built in 1614 after the first burned down, was octagonal), and was open to the sky, somewhat like a modern football or baseball stadium, though much smaller. It had three tiers of galleries surrounding the central "yard" or pit, and a narrow roof over the top gallery. But most interesting from our viewpoint was the stage—or rather *stages* —which was very different from that of most modern theatres. These have the familiar "picture-frame" stage: a raised platform at one end of the auditorium, framed by curtains and footlights, and viewed only from the front like a picture. Shakespeare's stage was very different.

The main stage, or *apron* as it was called, jutted well out into the pit, and did not extend all the way across from side to side. There was an area on either side for patrons to sit,

or stand in, so that actors performing on the apron could be viewed from three sides instead of one. In addition there was an inner stage, a narrow rectangular recess let into the wall behind the main stage. When not in use it could be closed by a curtain drawn across in front; when open it could be used for interior scenes, arbor scenes, tomb and anteroom scenes and the like. On either side of this inner stage were doors through which the main stage was entered. Besides the inner and outer stages there were no fewer than four other areas where the action of the play, or parts of it, might be performed. Immediately above the inner stage, and corresponding to it in size and shape, was another room with its front exposed. This was the upper stage, and was used for upstairs scenes, or for storage when not otherwise in use. In front of this was a narrow railed gallery, which could be used for balcony scenes, or ones requiring the walls of a castle or the ramparts of a fortress. On either side of it and on the same level was a window-stage, so-called because it consisted of a small balcony enclosed by windows that opened on hinges. This permitted actors to stand inside and speak from the open windows to others on the main stage below. In all it was a very versatile multiple stage and gave the dramatist and producer much more freedom in staging than most modern theatres afford. It is interesting to note that some of the new theatres today have revived certain of the features of the Elizabethan stage.

Very little in the way of scenery and backdrops was used. The dramatist's words and the imagination of the audience supplied the lack of scenery. No special lighting effects were possible since plays were performed in the daylight that streamed in through the unroofed top of the three-tiered enclosure that was the playhouse. Usually a few standard stage-props were on hand: trestles and boards to form a table, benches and chairs, flagons, an altar, artificial trees, weapons, a man's severed head, and a few other items. Costumes were usually elaborate and gorgeous, though no attempt was made to reproduce the dress of the time and place portrayed in the play.

Play production in Shakespeare's time was clearly very different from that of ours, but we need have no doubts about the audience's response to what they saw and heard on stage. They came, they saw, and the dramatist conquered, for they kept coming back for more and more. And despite the opposition that the theatre encountered from Puritans and others, who thought it the instrument of Satan, the theatre in Shakespeare's time flourished as one of the supreme glories of a glorious age.

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INTRODUCTION TO

King John

DATE AND SOURCE

Shakespeare's *King John* was not printed until 1623, but in 1598 Francis Meres, the English cleric and writer, referred to it as being one of Shakespeare's tragedies. Another play, *The Troublesome Raigne of John King of England*, was "imprinted at London for Sampson Clarke, to be sold at his shop, on the backe-side of the Royall Exchange" in 1591, and this play had already been "publikely acted by the Queenes Majesties Players, in the honourable citie of London." The relationship between the two plays has long been in dispute. One certainly used the other, but which?

A common view is that Shakespeare rewrote the anonymous, *The Troublesome Raigne*. E. M. Tillyard in *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944) suggests that Shakespeare wrote *both* plays, the difficulties encountered in revising and compressing the much longer play of *The Troublesome Raigne* accounting for *King John* being "so badly proportioned." On the other hand, the opinion that the debt was the other way round has been supported by E. A. J. Honigmann in his excellent preface to the Arden edition of *King John*, first published in 1954 and reprinted in 1959 and 1963.

We are on firmer ground when we consider Shakespeare's debt to other works. The action and style of *King John* have certain counterparts in Holinshed's historical account; there are verbal echoes of details given by the church historian John Foxe in his *Actes and Monuments*—Foxe, for example, has a woodcut illustrating the death of John's poisoner, with the caption:

> The monke lyeth here burst of the poyson,

In *King John* Hubert tells of the similar fate of the king's poisoner thus:

A monk—I tell you,—a resolved villain—
Whose bowels suddenly burst out.

Shakespeare's play also appears to owe something to Matthew of Paris's *Historia Maior* (1571); to the Latin MS., the *Wakefield Chronicle*, from which alone, it seems, Shakespeare could have learned that April 1 was the day on which Queen Elinor died; to Ralph Coggeshall's *Chronicon Anglicanum*, for an account of the attempted blinding and death of Arthur.

But the story of King John in a popular form had long had wide circulation. It focused not on the struggle between an inept and greedy despot and his nobles, which culminated in the signing of the Magna Carta—an act that Elizabethans would, in any case, have regarded as reprehensible and liable to weaken the established order, but on John's quarrels with the Pope. With the Reformation John's discreditable activities were transformed. In the play of *King John* by John Bale, probably written before 1540, King John was the mouthpiece for a sustained warning of the vicious tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church, and the monk who finally poisoned him was an abstract personage called Dissimulation. In *The Troublesome Raigne* John was introduced as a hero and champion of English freedom.

For Christs true faith indur'd he many a storme
And set himself against the Man of Rome,
Untill base treason (by a damned wight)
Did all his former triumphs put to flight.

King John, in fact, almost ceased to be an historical figure and epitomized instead the spirit of a new age which was national and anti-papal.

SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMATIC STRATEGY

Shakespeare shares the common lack of concern among English Renaissance playwrights for historical accuracy. He is silent on some of the most significant events of John's reign. He distorts others and he violates chronology in his sequence of events. In Act IV, scene ii, for example, the whole span of historical incident is crammed into one scene and made to occur simultaneously in order to intensify the

sense of John's impending doom. It begins with John's new coronation and the rumored death of Arthur which occurred in 1202, and continues with the landing of the French (1216), the death of Elinor (1204), the death of Constance (1201), the episode of Peter of Pomfret (1213), and the reference to the five moons (1200). Sometimes Shakespeare chooses to emphasize topical aspects. Arthur's rightful claim to the throne and John's method of disposing of it could not easily be glossed over, especially in Elizabethan times. Shakespeare makes it central to the action. His audience cannot have failed to mark the dangerous analogy: John's conduct—his orders to Hubert and his subsequent recriminations—was similar to that of Elizabeth towards her secretary Davison who, on her instructions, arranged for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. Shakespeare also emphasizes the pathos. He makes Arthur a child instead of the young knight described by Holinshed; he presents Constance as a helpless widow; whereas the chroniclers declared John's claim to the throne to be as good as Arthur's, Shakespeare makes clear from the beginning that John is a usurper. In general Shakespeare adapts, modifies and ignores historical and pseudo-historical incident to suit his dramatic purpose.

Critical opinion on the quality of the play is sparse. It is also divided. Much of the earlier criticism was based on a dubious premise, the assumption that Shakespeare was structuring a drama on the theme of rebellion and strife in which the characters were intended to be soundly motivated, with the dénouement arising inevitably from the circumstances, deficiencies and actions of the central figure. They saw the tragedy depending for its strength on contrasting attitudes and actions, centering on John as the villain and the Bastard as the hero and savior of England. But, assessed in this way, the play seemed "structurally deficient," with the scenes in the last two acts lacking organic relationships, with the political action being "weakened and scamped."

THE PLOT

The central plot itself gives the play a certain cohesion. The various incidents in the play are assembled in a comparatively simple sequence because this is a tragedy in the

medieval sense. In general the action follows the Wheel of Fortune pattern. To the mid-point of the play John is successful and he is directly helped by Fortune. He takes Angiers, and he captures Arthur, his young nephew, the rival claimant for the British throne. Then his military speed, which has accounted for his success, goes to his opponent. John feels that he has acted precipitously in seeking to dispose of his nephew and yet, ironically enough, he hopes for speed to overcome his misfortunes and to dissuade his nobles from joining with the enemy. But, as the Bastard tells him: "Wild amazement hurries up and down/ The little number of your doubtful friends." Fortune continues to assist events: Arthur is accidentally killed: the French enjoy quick success. Reports given by the Bastard and by Hubert make it seem that all supernatural influences concur with the acts of Fortune and this impression is confirmed by the Bastard's conclusion to the most violent act of the play: "And heaven itself doth frown upon the land." Fortune dominates the final act. Because of his fever John gets taken to Swinstead Abbey, thus providing a monk with the opportunity to murder him; the French lose ships on Goodwin sands, the English in the Wash. Both French and English have used the simile of floods and rising waters to convey the idea of the destructive nature of their own power, but now what ultimately checks both sides is Fortune or Nature, which swallows up both armies. The event which finally placates Fortune is the death of John. With John dying, his acknowledgment of his own worthlessness and his belief that England has suffered great defeat, the tragic fall is complete. But there is a danger that his death may mean the death of England also. His successor instantly voices his fears:

> What surety of the world, what hope, what stay,
> When this was now a king, and now is clay?

It is then that the Bastard is able to turn with hope to the supernatural powers to help him fight for England, and to suggest that already Fortune has changed:

> Now, now, you stars that move in your right spheres,
> Where be your powers? Show now your mended faiths,

And instantly return with me again,
To push destruction and perpetual shame
Out of the weak door of our fainting land.

Immediately afterwards Salisbury informs him that peace is about to be negotiated. Discipline and order are restored: the doubts of Prince Henry are firmly answered by the Bastard:

O, let us pay the time but needful woe,
Since it hath been beforehand with our griefs.
This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again
Come the three corners of the world in arms
And we shall shock them! Nought shall make us rue
If England to itself do rest but true!

The play, following tragic convention, reasserts accepted values and closes on a somber yet confident note.

THE CHARACTERS

The characters themselves do not play the roles which the simple pattern of action might seem to allot to them, and they do not lend themselves to analysis as credible individuals. Balanced against each other, they are significant less for contrasting character traits than for what they represent and the way they contribute dramatically to each scene. John's career shows the course of an anti-hero on a falling curve; the Bastard's on an ascending curve. John's illegitimate tenure moves him to resort to crime; the Bastard renounces his to become a national leader. But to see the Bastard as a resolute spirit consistently opposed to John's negative or vacillating one is to ignore much of the play. In the opening scene John appears to be in full command. He utters threats against France and shows confidence that he can carry them out, with the Church paying for the expenses involved. His behavior seems kingly, and the audience, while not asked to condone his inferior claim to the throne, is not expected to disapprove of him. John appreciates the bluntness

of the Bastard and shows that to this nephew, where his own territorial rights are not threatened, he can act sympathetically. When he meets King Philip he is firm, and the disposition of the French court does not encourage the point of view that England would have fared better under Arthur and his supporters.

Of the compromise which temporarily unites England and France, however, criticism *is* implied. Elinor, who has already shown herself dominating, without scruples and capable of enjoying a verbal brawl, encourages it, and Constance's outrage is sympathetically presented. The Bastard disapproves on principle, and we are made to feel that John's active role in promoting the marriage alliance is reprehensible. He takes one more stand which is calculated to win the approval of an Elizabethan audience: he defies the Pope. But his success in battle is immediately followed by his iniquitous suggestion to Hubert that he should kill Arthur, and thereafter he is utterly unheroic until the death scene.

Superficially, the behavior of the Bastard offers many contrasts: in the first act he is forthright, fearless, frankly anxious for status, blunt to the point of crudity, conscious of his effect on Elinor as well as John and ready to turn it to his advantage. In the second, he is spoiling for a fight, contemptuous of the alliance based on a marriage of expediency and inspired by the worship of "commodity." In the third he is in the thick of the action. He kills Austria and rescues Elinor—an exploit which other authorities give John credit for. In the fourth act he is credulous of alarming rumors, sincere in his grief at Arthur's death, but the first to suggest that it may have been accidental. Confronted with John's worthlessness, he is forced to make a difficult choice between sedition and serving a bad master. Prudent regard for the welfare of the country makes him continue to support John and it is his resolution which prevents England from collapsing in the face of French invasion. Unlike John, he refuses to compromise.

But if John fails as a king, the Bastard fails as a statesman and general. John's delegation of authority to his favorite may be less an indication of the latter's fitness to assume

power than an indication of John's degradation is that he is willing to relegate his duties to a servant. It results in the Bastard making ineffectual ranting speeches to the invader and in the loss of half the army through misfortune or, possibly, through mismanagement. "For in a night the best part of my power,/ As I upon advantage did remove,/ Were in' the Washes all unwarily/ Devoured by the unexpected flood." The sophisticated counterpoising prevents the Bastard from rising to heroic grandeur. Yet he epitomizes the spirit of the resistance of England. What Shakespeare appears to be saying is that this bastard breed with French and English blood in its veins embodies the loyalty, vigor, aspiration and hardheadedness of England and is her resource when freedom, either political or religious, is threatened. Here, certainly, the Bastard contrasts with John who, thrust to greatness by his mother and possessing only a disputed claim to the throne, threatens the stability of the realm because of his treacherous and uninspiring personality.

The Bastard also plays something of the role of the Shakespearean fool, and the vivid concrete quality of his language, especially the use of sexual or animal imagery, give his speeches a striking immediacy and a memorable persuasive quality. He can tell the truth when others prevaricate, comment with biting irony on current happenings, indicate motives and remind the audience of larger issues. In addition, therefore, to playing a dramatic role as a man of action, to representing a dominant mood, he appears to have a choric function.

The other participants in the action are less complicated. King Philip of France's aggression springs from motives as unethical as John's. He is ready to compromise for the sake of commodity, but is equally ready to renege when intimidated by the power of Rome. His son Louis, the Dauphin, is prepared to marry for expediency, to pay lip-service to love and to treacherously dispose of the English lords who support him. Of the three women, Constance is developed into a figure of near-tragic proportions both in her opposition to Elinor and more especially in her grief at being deprived of Arthur. The potentially tragic situation of Blanch, marrying to bring about the union of two enemies and re-

solving to follow her husband when that union is broken, is not developed. Elinor's role is slight, confined to two scenes, in which she ultimately reveals herself to be not only dominating but nasty. The defecting nobles, though rash, are honorable men and are meant to be excused; Pandulph, on the other hand, as the papal delegate, is thoroughly unprincipled. Of the character of Hubert we are kept ignorant until the great scene between him and Arthur, and as a result, the tension is increased. We realize later, both from his own conduct and from the opinion expressed by the dying Melun, that the man who is confronted with the conflicting claims of obedience to his king and to humanity is worthy of respect. Arthur is intended to be a tragic figure, thoughtful for the welfare of his mother and of others, a victim of Fortune.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE PLAY

King John is a play of ideas, not of character. It has no heroes, only anti-heroes who are themselves metaphors for the body-politic. If explores anxieties which were very real to the Elizabethans—political disorder, incompetence, breach of faith, and papal interference. To do so it does not require either the kind of architectural structure or the characterization which we find in the tragedies. One reason for its strength is the distinctive quality of its language. It is in the high style, sonorous and stately in tone, rhetorical. It is rich in imagery, much of it conventional, but elegantly turned for dramatic effect. The most powerful source of its vitality is in the various clusters of imagery which reverberate through the play or make further combinations to illuminate and reinforce the theme.

Because Shakespeare is concerned with moral concepts, personification, as Spurgeon notes, is a special feature, and the word "right" occurs twenty-eight times—more than in any other play of Shakespeare's. The dominating image arises from the central and most memorable scene of the play in which Hubert fails in his intention to blind Arthur. This is the *seeing eye* (II. i. p. 37; IV. ii. p. 79; IV. ii. p. 82; IV. ii. p. 89). It is associated with "right" and "truth" and is opposed to "force," a quality which is represented by the

image of the hands. It is last used by the dying King who, having finally acquired self-knowledge, remarks to the Bastard: "O cousin, thou art come to set mine eye."

It is also one of a whole series of body images which dominate the language and are used to illustrate and vivify impressions of violence. Philip sees the object of intended assault, the city of Angiers, as a face—"our cannon shall be beat/ Against the brows of this resisting imminent town;" John also sees that:

> The cannons have their bowels full of wrath,
> And ready mounted are they to spit forth
> Their iron indignation 'gainst your walls:
> All preparation for a bloody siege
> And merciless proceeding by these French
> Comforts your city's eyes, your winking gates;
> And but for our approach those sleeping stones,
> That as a waist doth girdle you about,
> By the compulsion of their ordinance
> By this time from their fixed beds of lime
> Had been dishabited, and wide havoc made
> For bloody power to rush upon your peace.
> But on the sight of us your lawful king,
> Who painfully with much expedient march
> Have brought a countercheck before your gates,
> To save unscratch'd your city's threat'ned cheeks,
> Behold, the French amaz'd vouchsafe a parle.

Here too, is an image of rape which, with images of bloodletting and fornication, enforces the meaning of the play. John's speech begins with a metaphor of aggressive bodily evacuation and conceives of the enemy as sleeping, inanimate, being stripped (dishabited) and attacked. The figure is further expanded by the Bastard in the same scene, but this time the enemy city is compared to a whore:

> By east and west let France and England mount
> Their battering cannon charged to the mouths,
> Till their soul-fearing clamours have brawl'd down
> The flinty ribs of this contemptuous city:
> I'd play incessantly upon these jades,

Even till unfenced desolation
Leave them as naked as the vulgar air.

The use of the conventional metaphor of the overflowing river to illustrate the effect of insurrection and disorder enhances the sense of the irrepressible and destructive quality of violence which is present on both sides: John argues that it will be Philip's fault if he causes the waters to rise and overflow. Constance uses the image to suggest the concealment of truth and right and the usurpation of power, when Salisbury tells her of the alliance which must put an end to her aspirations for her son:

Why holds thine eye that lamentable rheum,
Like a proud river peering o'er its bonds?

John refers to civil war as "this inundation of mistemper'd humor," and the penitent lords refer to the king as an ocean and see themselves as "a bated and retired flood."

The language brings out the meaning of the play and tells us its theme. Early in the play the Bastard explains that commodity or self-interest, which upsets the principle of order, has undone God's work. The play shows the result of the worship of commodity and the language reinforces the truth that it provides violence and lust. The protagonists represent qualities, and as such can illustrate cause or effect, from the analyzer of commodity who, if his respect of it is ironical, has nevertheless upset the sacred principle of order by his determination to rise to power, to the child Arthur whose argument, Honigmann observes, shows duplicity, "a more or less conscious technique of pleading . . . ," for the sake of expediency. With the advent of evil, with the visiting of the iniquities of the fathers on the sons, only destruction and time can right the balance.

John Masefield saw the play as an "intellectual form in which a number of people with obsessions illustrate the idea of treachery." Such a view does not take into account the bonds of affection or loyalty which exist between Elinor and John, Constance and Arthur, Philip and the Dauphin, the Bastard and John. There are numerous examples of treachery, of course, but they arise from a worship of Commodity; for

this reason John assumes the throne, makes an alliance with France, seeks to kill his nephew, breaks faith with Hubert later; for the same reason France breaks the alliance at the behest of the Pope's legate (who is himself motivated by the same self-interest), and plots to kill the English nobles who come over to his side.

On stage the play is more powerful than a reading suggests. It consists of a series of great dramatic scenes full of action and splendid rhetoric, providing opportunity for pageantry and spectacle. The protagonists are like "humors" characters and they interact with one another in a lively and interesting way. The deterioration of John seems dramatically convincing, even compelling, and his villainy is powerfully conveyed. The central charter that emerges is not an individual. It is England, represented first by John and then by the Bastard, and it is as torn and uneasy as this allocation signifies. With the death of John, however, unity and order is restored. The play ends on a rising note, with the Bastard expressing the wild, lusty spirit of a nation spoiling for a fight and never willing to give in for the sake of expediency—the spirit of Elizabethan England.

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. The chorus in Elizabethan drama usually gives the prologue and epilogue and makes interpretive comments which link the acts and foreshadow other events. To what extent do you consider that the Bastard's role can be so described?
2. *King John* has a dramatic cohesion even though it is not structurally as well-knit as Shakespeare's tragedies. What contrasting characters and divergent attitudes help to unify the action?
3. Consider that you are about to produce this play on the stage. In what way does Shakespeare provide you with effective peaks of emotion? What are the ways in which he establishes immediate communication with the audience, enabling the spectators to engross themselves in the action and understand the motivations of the players?
4. How does Shakespeare frequently remind us that his moral thesis, the indictment of expediency, is more important than any single character or event?
5. An insurmountable problem in making a play from the life of King John is that John has no tragic potential. His actions are usually weak or treacherous and he is governed only by expediency. Shakespeare cannot avoid giving John a central role on stage, but in spite of John's weak character the play has an impression of vitality and strength. Much of the power of the play is in its language, character arrangements and skillful juxtaposition of scenes. But in what way does Shakespeare most successfully offset John's negative qualities and how does he make the *idea* of England the controlling element in the play?
6. What do each of the following passages tell us of the speaker and of the dramatic development of the play:

   a) "I would that I were low laid in my grave:
      I am not worth this coil that's made for me."

b) "Sirrah, were I at home,
At your den, sirrah, with your lioness,
I would set an ox-head to your lion's hide,
And make a monster of you."

c) "Why stand these royal fronts amazed thus?
Cry "havoc!" kings; back to the stained field,
You equal potents, fiery kindled spirits!"

d) . . . That smooth-fac'd gentleman, tickling commodity,
Commodity, the bias of the world. . ."

e) "He is the very serpent in my way;
And wheresoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me: dost thou understand me?
Thou art his keeper."

f) "You are as fond of grief as of your child."

g) "I must be brief, lest resolution drop
Out at mine eyes in tender womanish tears."

h) "It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves that take their humours for a warrant
To break within the bloody house of life . . ."

i) "Is this Ascension-day? Did not the prophet
Say that before Ascension-day at noon
My crown I should give off? Even so I have."

j) "O Cousin, thou art come to set mine eye:
The tackle of my heart is crack'd and burn'd,
And all the shrouds wherewith my life should sail
Are turned to one thread, one little hair."

k) "Come the three corners of the world in arms
And we shall shock them!"

STUDY QUESTIONS

ACT I

1. In what way does Shakespeare immediately present the central action?
2. What point of view is expressed by the phrase "borrowed majesty"?
3. How is the phrase amplified by Queen Elinor later, and what light do her remarks throw on her character?
4. The dispute between the two Faulconbridge brothers and the reaction of King John and his mother take up most of the first scene and the declaration of war and the issues which have led up to it are treated with the utmost brevity. What is the reason?
5. What is the appeal of the Bastard to John, and what impression do we get of his character, from both his exchange with the king and later with his mother, Lady Faulconbridge?

ACT II

1. In the first scene the drama switches to France. By what means are links with the previous scene established?
2. In the first act, John seems to be the voice of English resistance. The issues are kept on a lofty plane. How does he maintain the same attitude in the altercation with Philip?
3. Does his apparent silence when the exchanges of Elinor, Constance, the Bastard, Limoge of Austria and Blanch interject a passionate and less-elevated tone further extend his character for us?
4. What kind of imagery does the Bastard use when seeking to provoke his father's killer?

5. How is this imagery picked up later in the same scene in the Bastard's final threat to the Duke of Austria?
6. How does the acrimonious exchange between Constance and Elinor inform us of the character of Constance and confirm what we have already learned of the character of Elinor?
7. How do the rhetorical speeches of the two kings to the citizens of Angiers balance each other and prepare us for their rejection?
8. How does the exchange between King John and Philip of France contribute to the mounting tension?
9. Both John and Philip use conventional images. What are these?
10. How does the Bastard's personification of death as a kind of giant maw convey a sense of immediacy and violence?
11. How, also, is the Bastard able to convey his own lust for action?
12. What proposition is put forward by Hubert as a solution to the dispute?
13. How is the fact that the Bastard and Elinor answer Hubert's proposal and John speaks only at Philip's request indicative of character of the Bastard and of John?
14. At the end of the first scene the Bastard comments on the action he has just seen: both parties reconciled by the betrothal of John's niece Blanch to Philip's son Louis. What is the basis of his criticism? Are we supposed to see the action from the same point of view?
15. Is the Bastard's final statement; "Gain, be my lord, for I will worship thee," ironical?
16. How does the language which Constance uses to upbraid Salisbury emphasize the lack of ethical values in both courts?

ACT III

1. In the first scene Pandulph, the papal legate, seeks to impose the will of the Church on both John and Philip. The

two kings react in different ways. How are we intended to regard their reactions?

2. What impression of Pandulph does his advice to Philip give us?
3. In the same scene to what extent does the character of Blanch have tragic aspects?
4. In the second scene the Bastard enters with the head of Limoges, Duke of Austria. How does this action presage what is to follow?
5. In his order to the Bastard to precede him to England, John tells him to "shake the bags/ Of hoarding abbots." "Shake-bag" was a slang term for thief. What, therefore, is the implied moral evaluation of such an act?
6. How does the imagery in John's long speech to Hubert, in which he says that he would reveal his thoughts to him if the circumstances were different, prepare us for his final proposition?
7. In the third scene, when the French are lamenting their losses, Constance appears, demented with grief. How does the imagery which she uses both look back to her earlier denunciation in Act II, sc. ii, and anticipate what *is to come*?
8. When Louis, the Dauphin, is discouraged, how does Pandulph rally him?
9. Pandulph maintains that a dozen French in arms in England "would be as a call/ "To train ten thousand English to their side." *Train*, which is usually glossed as "to attract, drawn on," is influenced by the noun *train*, meaning "treachery" or "trap." How does the pejorative sense emphasize Pandulph's cynicism and hypocrisy?

ACT IV

1. How do the opening lines of the first scene immediately force upon us an awareness that this is the climactic scene?
2. By what means does Shakespeare prolong the dramatic tension of the scene?

3. How do the insights given into the characters of Arthur and Hubert enhance the poignancy of the situation?
4. In the second scene Shakespeare builds up disapproval for John on two principal counts. What are these?
5. By what means does Shakespeare emphasize John's duplicity, thereby preparing us for a correct evaluation of the reason for his repenting of Arthur's death?
6. What is the cumulative effect of the various items of news which John receives immediately after Arthur's death?
7. Both the Bastard and Hubert allude to supernatural portents. What is the effect of such descriptions and how does the gravity with which both men regard them (compared with John's summary dismissal) emphasize the general feeling of malaise?
8. By what arguments does John seek to lay the blame on Hubert?
9. How does our opinion of Hubert enhance the drama of the third scene in which Salisbury and his companions, on finding Arthur dead, believe that Hubert is responsible?
10. How does the concluding speech reinforce what we have already learned of the character of the Bastard?

ACT V

1. Why does John sacrifice his principles and become reconciled to the Pope?
2. What advice does the Bastard give him and how is it consistent with his general attitude?
3. What is his reaction to compromise?
4. From what we have learned of John's character, is his delegation of power to the Bastard—"Have thou the ordering of this present time"—unexpected?
5. What reasons does Salisbury give for joining the French and to what extent are we made to feel sympathetic?
6. What are the arguments whereby Pandulph and the Bastard seek to persuade Louis to desist?

7. How does the third scene, opening in a mood quite contrary to the confident one just expressed, enhance the tension and point towards the conclusion?

8. What is the import of the speech of Melun just before he dies? How do his revelations enforce our previous impressions of the lack of ethical values in the French as well as the English court?

9. How does the language of Melun's speech link Louis' intended treachery with the behavior of John towards Arthur?

10. Hubert gives the first intimations of John's fate. The effect of the indirect presentation of the death of the central figure is to shift the focus of attention from him to the Bastard. How has Shakespeare already prepared us for this transference and how is it emphasized here?

11. How is this effect heightened by introducing Prince Henry at this point for the *first time* and by playing out the death scene with minor figures (Bigot and Pembroke), with Salisbury silent and the Bastard arriving only at the final moment?

12. How does the substance of the Bastard's own speech on entry also confirm that the focus is on the fate of England, not on the death of the king?

13. The effect of Shakespeare's emphasis on focus prepares us for the final speech of the Bastard. How is the resolute speech both indicative of the Bastard's character and a suitable conclusion to both the immediate action and to the play as a whole?

King John

ACT 1

ACT I

In the Opening scene at the English court, the French ambassador tells John that King Philip of France claims the English throne for Arthur, Duke of Bretagne, nephew of King John and the son of John's deceased elder brother. John disallows the claim and swears to answer force with force. Elinor, John's mother, who approves of his stand, declares that France is being egged on by Arthur's ambitious mother, Constance. Then Robert Faulconbridge and his elder brother Philip come in litigation over the family estate. Philip, usually known as Bastard, is the son of Richard Coeur de Lion, and he admits his illegitimacy to John, even though he knows he will now lose his inheritance. Both John and his mother approve of his bluntness. John knights him and takes him into his service.

ACT I. Scene I.

KING JOHN'S *palace.*

Enter KING JOHN, QUEEN ELINOR, PEMBROKE, ESSEX, SALISBURY, *and others, with* CHATILLON.

KING JOHN.

Now, say, Chatillon, what would France with us?

CHATILLON.

Thus, after greeting, speaks the King of France,
In my behaviour,[1] to the majesty,
The borrow'd[2] majesty of England here.

QUEEN ELINOR.

A strange beginning:—borrow'd majesty!

KING JOHN.

Silence, good mother; hear the embassy.[3]

---

[1] **In my behaviour:** i.e., through me.
[2] **borrow'd:** taken by unlawful means.
[3] **embassy:** the message entrusted to an ambassador.

CHATILLON.

Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geffrey's son,
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island and the territories,—
To Ireland, Poictiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine;
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
Which sways usurpingly[1] these several titles,
And put the same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign.

KING JOHN.

What follows, if we disallow of this?

CHATILLON.

The proud control of fierce and bloody war,
To enforce these rights so forcibly withheld.

KING JOHN.

Here have we war for war, and blood for blood,
Controlment[2] for controlment: so answer France.

CHATILLON.

Then take my king's defiance from my mouth,
The furthest limit of my embassy.[3]

KING JOHN.

Bear mine to him, and so depart in peace:
Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France;[4]
For ere thou canst report I will be there,
The thunder of my cannon shall be heard:
So, hence! Be thou the trumpet of our wrath,
And sullen presage[5] of your own decay.—
An honourable conduct[6] let him have:—
Pembroke, look to't.—Farewell, Chatillon.

[*Exeunt* CHATILLON *and* PEMBROKE.

---

[1] sways usurpingly: rules without any right. [2] Controlment: compulsion; restraint. [3] The furthest . . . embassy: as far as I can go in my function as ambassador. [4] France: the king of France. [5] sullen presage: grim foreteller. [6] conduct: safe conduct; escort.

QUEEN ELINOR.

What now, my son! have I not ever said
How that ambitious Constance would not cease
Till she had kindled France and all the world
Upon the right and party[1] of her son?
This might have been prevented and made whole[2]
With very easy arguments[3] of love;
Which now the manage[4] of two kingdoms must
With fearful bloody issue arbitrate.

KING JOHN.

Our strong possession and our right for us.

QUEEN ELINOR [*aside to* KING JOHN].

Your strong possession much more than your right,
Or else it must go wrong with you and me:
So much my conscience whispers in your ear,
Which none but heaven and you and I shall hear.

Enter a SHERIFF.

ESSEX.

My liege, here is the strangest controversy,
Come from the country to be judged by you,
That e'er I heard: shall I produce the men?

KING JOHN.

Let them approach.— [*Exit* SHERIFF.
Our abbeys and our priories shall pay
This expedition's charge.[5]

Enter SHERIFF, *with* ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE, *and* PHILIP *his bastard brother.*

What men are you?

BASTARD.

Your faithful subject I, a gentleman
Born in Northamptonshire, and eldest son,

---

[1] party: cause.
[2] made whole: healed.
[3] easy arguments: slight expressions.
[4] manage: leadership.
[5] charge: cost; expense.

As I suppose, to Robert Faulconbridge,
A soldier, by the honour-giving hand
Of Cœur-de-lion[1] knighted in the field.

KING JOHN.

What art thou?

ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE.

The son and heir to that same Faulconbridge.

KING JOHN.

Is that the elder, and art thou the heir?
You came not of one mother, then, it seems.

BASTARD.

Most certain of one mother, mighty king;
That is well known; and, as I think, one father:
But for the certain knowledge of that truth,
I put you o'er[2] to heaven and to my mother:
Of that I doubt, as all men's children may.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Out on thee, rude man! thou dost shame thy mother
And wound her honour with this diffidence.[3]

BASTARD.

I, madam? no, I have no reason for it,—
That is my brother's plea, and none of mine;
The which if he can prove, a'[4] pops me out
At least from fair five hundred pound a year:
Heaven guard my mother's honour and my land!

KING JOHN.

A good blunt[5] fellow.—Why, being younger born,
Doth he lay claim to thine inheritance?

BASTARD.

I know not why, except to get the land.
But once he slander'd me with bastardy:
But whe'r[6] I be as true begot[7] or no,

---

[1] Cœur-de-lion: Richard, the lionhearted, John's older brother. [2] put you o'er: refer you. [3] diffidence: distrust; lack of faith. [4] a': he. [5] blunt: direct. [6] whe'r: whether. [7] begot: begotten.

That still [1] I lay upon my mother's head;[2]
But, that I am as well begot, my liege,—
Fair fall the bones that took the pains for me!—
Compare our faces, and be judge yourself.
If old Sir Robert did beget us both
And were our father and this son like him,
O old Sir Robert, father, on my knee
I give heaven thanks I was not like to thee!

KING JOHN.

Why, what a madcap hath heaven lent us here!

QUEEN ELINOR.

He hath a trick[3] of Cœur-de-lion's face;
The accent of his tongue affecteth him:[4]
Do you not read some tokens[5] of my son
In the large composition[6] of this man?

KING JOHN.

Mine eye hath well examined his parts,
And finds them perfect[7] Richard.—Sirrah,[8] speak,
What doth move you to claim your brother's land?

BASTARD.

Because he hath a half-face,[9] like my father,
With that half-face would he have all my land:
A half-faced groat[10] five hundred pound a year!

ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE.

My gracious liege, when that my father lived,
Your brother did employ my father much,—

BASTARD.

Well, sir, by this you cannot get my land:
Your tale must be, how he employ'd [11] my mother.

ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE.

And once dispatcht him in an embassy[12]
To Germany, there with the emperor
To treat of high affairs touching[13] that time.

---

[1] still: always. [2] lay upon my mother's head: leave up to my mother. [3] trick: hint. [4] affecteth him: resembles him. [5] tokens: signs. [6] composition: bodily build. [7] perfect: altogether. [8] Sirrah: a contemptuous form of greeting. [9] half-face: thin face. [10] groat: a small silver coin with a profile engraved on it. [11] employ'd: used. [12] in an embassy: as ambassador. [13] touching: concerning.

Th'advantage of his absence took the king,
And in the meantime sojourn'd at my father's;
Where how he did prevail, I shame[1] to speak,
But truth is truth: large lengths of seas and shore
Between my father and my mother lay,—
As I have heard my father speak himself,—
When this same lusty[2] gentleman was got.
Upon his death-bed he by will bequeath'd
His lands to me; and took it, on his death,[3]
That this, my mother's son, was none of his;
And if he were, he came into the world
Full fourteen weeks before the course of time.
Then, good my liege, let me have what is mine,
My father's land, as was my father's will.

KING JOHN.

Sirrah, your brother is legitimate;
Your father's wife did after wedlock bear him;
And if she did play false, the fault was hers;
Which fault lies on the hazards[4] of all husbands
That marry wives. Tell me, how if my brother,
Who, as you say, took pains to get this son,
Had of your father claim'd this son for his?
In sooth, good friend, your father might have kept
This calf, bred from his cow, from all the world;
In sooth, he might: then, if he were my brother's
My brother might not claim him; nor your father
Being none of his, refuse[5] him: this concludes,—[6]
My mother's son did get your father's heir;
Your father's heir must have your father's land.

ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE.

Shall, then, my fathers will be of no force
To dispossess that child which is not his?

---

[1] shame: am ashamed.
[2] lusty: merry.
[3] took it, on his death: vowed at the risk of his soul.
[4] lies on the hazards: is among the chances.
[5] refuse: disown.
[6] this concludes: this settles the matter.

BASTARD.

Of no more force to dispossess me, sir,
Than was his will to get me, as I think.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Whether hadst thou rather be[1] a Faulconbridge,
And like thy brother, to enjoy thy land,
Or the reputed son of Cœur-de-lion,
Lord of thy presence,[2] and no land beside?

BASTARD.

Madam, an if[3] my brother had my shape,
And I had his, Sir Robert's his, like him;
And if my legs were two such riding-rods,[4]
My arms such eel-skins stuft; my face so thin,
That in mine ear I durst not stick a rose,
Lest men should say, 'Look, where three-farthings[5] goes!'
And, to his shape, were heir to all this land,—
Would I might never stir from off this place,
I'ld give it every foot to have this face;
I would not be Sir Nob[6] in any case.[7]

QUEEN ELINOR.

I like thee well: wilt thou forsake thy fortune,
Bequeath thy land to him, and follow me?
I am a soldier, and now bound to France.

BASTARD.

Brother, take you my land, I'll take my chance:
Your face hath got five hundred pound a year;
Yet sell your face for five pence, and 'tis dear.—[8]
Madam, I'll follow you unto the death.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Nay, I would have you go before me thither.

BASTARD.

Our country manners give our betters way.

---

[1] Whether . . . be: would you rather be. [2] presence: person. [3] an if: if. [4] riding-rods: switches for horses. [5] three-farthings: very thin pieces of silver, with an impression of the queen's profile, a rose behind her ear. [6] Nob: a Jack of the same suit as the card turned up. [7] in any case: under any circumstances. [8] dear: too costly.

KING JOHN.

What is thy name?

BASTARD.

Philip, my liege,—so is my name begun,—
Philip, good old Sir Robert's wife's eldest son.

KING JOHN.

From henceforth bear his name whose form thou bear'st:
Kneel thou down Philip, but rise more great,—
Arise Sir Richard and Plantagenet.[1]

BASTARD.

Brother by the mother's side, give me your hand:
My father gave me honour, yours gave land.—
Now blessed be the hour, by night or day,
When I was got, Sir Robert was away!

QUEEN ELINOR.

The very spirit of Plantagenet!—
I am thy grandam,[2] Richard; call me so.

BASTARD.

Madam, by chance, but not by truth:[3] what though?
Something about,[4] a little from the right,[5]
In at the window, or else o'er the hatch;
Who dares not stir by day must walk by night;
And have is have, however men do catch;
Near or far off, well won is still well shot;
And I am I, howe'er I was begot.

KING JOHN.

Go, Faulconbridge: now hast thou thy desire;
A landless knight[6] makes thee a landed squire.—
Come, madam,—and come, Richard; we must speed
For France, for France; for it is more than need.

BASTARD.

Brother, adieu: good fortune come to thee!

---

[1] Plantagenet: surname of the royal house.
[2] grandam: grandmother.
[3] by truth: honestly.
[4] Something about: in a roundabout way; irregularly.
[5] right: right course or road.
[6] A landless knight: i.e., the bastard.

For thou wast got i' th' way of honesty.

[*Exeunt all but* BASTARD.

A foot of honour better than I was;
But many a many foot of land the worse.
Well, now can I make any Joan[1] a lady:—
'Good den,[2] Sir Richard:'—'God-a-mercy, fellow;'—
And if his name be George, I'll call him Peter;
For new-made honour doth forget men's names,—
'Tis too respective[3] and too sociable
For your conversion.[4] Now your traveller,—
He and his toothpick at my worship's mess;
And when my knightly stomach is sufficed,
Why then I suck my teeth, and catechize
My picked[5] man of countries:—'My dear sir,'
Thus, leaning on mine elbow, I begin,
'I shall beseech you'—that is question now;
And then comes answer like an Absey-book:—[6]
'O sir,' says answer, 'at your best command;
At your employment; at your service, sir:'
'No, sir,' says question, 'I, sweet sir, at yours:'
And so, ere answer knows what question would,—
Saving in dialogue of compliment,
And talking of the Alps and Apennines,
The Pyrenean[7] and the river Po,—
It draws toward supper in conclusion so.
But this is worshipful society,
And fits the mounting spirit like myself;
For he is but a bastard to the time,[8]
That doth not smack of observation;[9]

---

[1] Joan: common or peasant girl. [2] 'Good den': good evening. [3] respective: respectful. [4] conversion: sudden change in rank. [5] picked: affected; fastidious. [6] Absey-book: A-B-C Book; a child's primer. [7] Pyrenean: Pyrenees. [8] but a bastard to the time: not a true child of the age in which he lives. [9] doth not smack of observation: lacks the powers of observation; that is, an ability to take advantage of the present circumstances.

And so am I, whether I smack or no;
And not alone in habit and device,[1]
Exterior form, outward accoutrement,
But from the inward motion[2] to deliver
Sweet, sweet, sweet poison[3] for the age's tooth:
Which, though I will not practise to deceive,
Yet to avoid deceit,[4] I mean to learn;
For it shall strew the footsteps of my rising.—
But who comes in such haste in riding-robes?
What woman-post[5] is this? hath she no husband,
That will take pains to blow a horn[6] before her?

Enter LADY FAULCONBRIDGE *and* JAMES GURNEY.

O me! it is my mother.—How now, good lady!
What brings you here to court so hastily?

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE.

Where is that slave, thy brother? where is he,
That holds in chase[7] mine honour up and down?

BASTARD.

My brother Robert? old Sir Robert's son?
Colbrand the giant, that same mighty man?
Is it Sir Robert's son that you seek so?

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE.

Sir Robert's son! Ay, thou unreverend[8] boy,
Sir Robert's son: why scorn'st thou at Sir Robert?
He is Sir Robert's son; and so art thou.

BASTARD.

James Gurney, wilt thou give us leave awhile?

JAMES GURNEY.

Good leave, good Philip.

BASTARD.

Philip?—sparrow![9]—James,
There's toys[10] abroad: anon I'll tell thee more.

---

[1] **habit and device:** dress and symbol of knighthood (heraldry). [2] **motion:** impulse. [3] **sweet poison:** flattery. [4] **deceit:** being deceived. [5] **woman-post:** female messenger. [6] **blow a horn:** act as a herald. [7] **holds in chase:** pursues. [8] **unreverend:** irreverent. [9] **Philip?—sparrow:** the sparrow was often called *Philip* because of its chirp; the newly knighted Richard objects to the use of his old name. [10] **toys:** rumors.

[*Exit* GURNEY.

Madam, I was not old Sir Robert's son;
Sir Robert might have eat[1] his part in me
Upon Good Friday, and ne'er broke his fast:
Sir Robert could do well: marry to confess,[2]
Could he get[3] me? Sir Robert could not do it,—
We know his handiwork:—therefore, good mother
To whom am I beholding for these limbs?
Sir Robert never holp[4] to make this leg.[5]

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE.

Hast thou conspired with thy brother too,
That for thine own gain shouldst defend mine honour?
What means this scorn, thou most untoward [6] knave?

BASTARD.

Knight, knight, good mother,—Basilisco-like:[7]
What! I am dubb'd;[8] I have it on my shoulder.
But, mother, I am not Sir Robert's son;
I have disclaim'd Sir Robert and my land;
Legitimation, name, and all is gone:
Then, good my mother, let me know my father,—
Some proper[9] man, I hope: who was it, mother?

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE.

Hast thou denied thyself a Faulconbridge?

BASTARD.

As faithfully as I deny the devil.

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE.

King Richard Cœur-de-lion was thy father:
By long and vehement suit I was seduced
To make room for him in my husband's bed:—
Heaven lay not my transgression to my charge!—

---

[1] *eat*: eaten. [2] *marry to confess*: indeed, to tell the truth. [3] *get*: beget. [4] *holp*: helped. [5] *make this leg*: from the shape of this leg, or make a bow like this. [6] *untoward*: perverse; impolite. [7] *Basilisco-like*: an allusion to the knight in the old play, *Soliman and Perseda*, who insisted on being called "Knight." [8] *dubb'd*: knighted by being tapped on the shoulder with the king's sword. [9] *proper*: handsome; well-favored.

Thou art the issue of my dear offence,[1]
Which was so strongly urged, past my defence.

BASTARD.

Now, by this light, were I to get again,[2]
Madam, I would not wish a better father.
Some sins do bear their privilege on earth,[3]
And so doth yours; your fault was not your folly:
Needs must you lay your heart at his dispose,[4]
Subjected tribute[5] to commanding love,
Against whose fury and unmatched force
The aweless[6] lion could not wage the fight,
Nor keep his princely heart from Richard's hand:[7]
He that perforce robs lions of their hearts
May easily win a woman's. Ay, my mother,
With all my heart I thank thee for my father!
Who lives and dares but say, thou didst not well
When I was got, I'll send his soul to hell.
Come, lady, I will show thee to my kin;
And they shall say, when Richard me begot,
If thou hadst said him nay, it had been sin:
Who says it was, he lies; I say 'twas not. [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] my dear offence: the sin which has cost me so dear. [2] get again: be conceived again. [3] some sins . . . earth: that is, some sins, however they may be regarded in heaven, are not censured on earth. [4] dispose: disposal. [5] Subjected tribute: the tribute demanded of a subject. [6] aweless: fearless. [7] Richard's hand: it is romantic legend that Richard thrust his hand down a lion's throat and plucked out its heart.

King John

ACT 2

ACT II

THE FRENCH FORCES rally before the town of Angiers. In addition to Philip of France, Louis (the Dauphin), Constance and Arthur, there is Limoges, Duke of Austria, who, despite the fact that he is known as the slayer of Richard I, is thanked for his support by Constance and her son. Already prepared by the ambassador for John's defiant stand, the group meets the invading English and argues on the merits of their respective claims. The altercation becomes violent: the Bastard seeks to insult his father's killer; Elinor and Constance exchange bitter recriminations. The people of Angiers accept neither party, but Hubert, spokesman for the town, proposes that a marriage be arranged between Louis and Blanch of Spain, John's niece. The proposal is accepted and Philip, delighted by the profitable alliance, drops the cause of Constance. The Bastard comments sardonically on this changed state of affairs, all achieved for the sake of commodity or self-interest. Constance is outraged by what has occurred and less philosophical.

ACT II. Scene I.

France. Before the walls of Angiers.

Enter, on one side, PHILIP, *king of France,* LOUIS, CONSTANCE, ARTHUR, *and* FORCES; *on the other, the* ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA *and* FORCES.

KING PHILIP.

Before Angiers well met, brave Austria.—
Arthur, that great forerunner of thy blood,[1]
Richard, that robb'd the lion of his heart,
And fought the holy wars in Palestine,

---

[1] *forerunner of thy blood:* predecessor of your royal line; Arthur is Richard's nephew, his father having been Richard's brother, Geoffrey.

By this brave duke came early to his grave:[1]
And, for amends to his posterity,
At our importance[2] hither is he come,
To spread his colours,[3] boy, in thy behalf;
And to rebuke[4] the usurpation
Of thy unnatural uncle, English John:
Embrace him, love him, give him welcome hither.

ARTHUR.

God shall forgive you Cœur-de-lion's death
The rather that you give his offspring life,
Shadowing[5] their right under your wings of war:
I give you welcome with a powerless hand,
But with a heart full of unstained love:
Welcome before the gates of Angiers, duke.

KING PHILIP.

A noble boy! Who would not do thee right?

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Upon thy cheek lay I this zealous kiss,
As seal to this indenture[6] of my love;—
That to my home I will no more return,
Till Angiers, and the right thou hast in France,
Together with that pale,[7] that white-faced shore,
Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides,
And coops[8] from other lands her islanders,—
Even till that England, hedged in with the main,[9]
That water-walled bulwark, still [10] secure[11]
And confident from foreign purposes,—
Even till that utmost corner of the west
Salute thee for her king: till then, fair boy,
Will I not think of home, but follow arms.

---

[1] By . . . grave: a historical inaccuracy; Richard was mortally wounded at the siege of Châlus, several years after the duke's death. [2] importance: importunity. [3] spread his colours: unfurl his battle flags. [4] rebuke: check. [5] Shadowing: sheltering; protecting. [6] indenture: agreement; contract. [7] pale: palisade (the white cliffs of Dover). [8] coops: encloses for defense. [9] main: sea. [10] still: always. [11] secure: free from fear.

CONSTANCE.

O, take his mother's thanks, a widow's thanks,
Till your strong hand shall help to give him strength
To make a more requital to[1] your love!

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

The peace of heaven is theirs that lift their swords
In such a just and charitable war.

KING PHILIP.

Well, then, to work: our cannon[2] shall be bent[3]
Against the brows[4] of this resisting town.—
Call for our chiefest men of discipline,[5]
To cull the plots of best advantages:[6]
We'll lay before this town our royal bones,
Wade to the market-place in Frenchmen's blood,
But we will make it subject to this boy.

CONSTANCE.

Stay[7] for an answer to your embassy,
Lest unadvised you stain your swords with blood:
My Lord Chatillon may from England bring
That right in peace, which here we urge in war;
And then we shall repent each drop of blood
That hot rash haste so indirectly[8] shed.

KING PHILIP.

A wonder, lady,—lo, upon thy wish,
Our messenger Chatillon is arrived!

Enter CHATILLON.

What England says, say briefly, gentle lord;
We coldly[9] pause for thee; Chatillon, speak.

CHATILLON.

Then turn your forces from this paltry siege,
And stir them up against a mightier task.

---

[1] **a more requital to:** a greater recompense for. [2] **cannon:** an anachronism; cannon had not yet been invented. [3] **bent:** aimed. [4] **brows:** walls; ramparts. [5] **discipline:** military strategy. [6] **To cull . . . advantages:** to select the best locations for our cannon. [7] **Stay:** wait. [8] **indirectly:** wrongfully. [9] **coldly:** calmly.

England, impatient of your just demands,
Hath put himself in arms: the adverse winds,
Whose leisure I have stay'd,[1] have given him time
To land his legions all [2] as soon as I;
His marches are expedient[3] to this town,
His forces strong, his soldiers confident.
With him along is come the mother-queen,
An Ate,[4] stirring him to blood and strife;
With her her niece,[5] the Lady Blanch of Spain;
With them a bastard of the king's deceased:[6]
And all th' unsettled humours[7] of the land,—
Rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries,[8]
With ladies' faces and fierce dragons' spleens,—[9]
Have sold their fortunes at their native homes,
Bearing their birthrights proudly on their backs,
To make a hazard of new fortunes here:
In brief, a braver choice of dauntless spirits,
Than now the English bottoms[10] have waft o'er,
Did never float upon the swelling tide,
To do offence and scathe[11] in Christendom.
The interruption of their churlish[12] drums [*Drum beats.*
Cuts off more circumstance:[13] they are at hand,
To parley or to fight; therefore prepare.

KING PHILIP.

How much unlookt for is this expedition! [14]

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

By how much unexpected, by so much
We must awake endeavour for defense;
For courage mounteth with occasion:[15]
Let them be welcome, then; we are prepared.

---

[1] stay'd: waited for. [2] all: quite. [3] expedient: expeditious; quick. [4] Ate: goddess of revenge. [5] niece: granddaughter. [6] king's deceased: of the dead king, Richard. [7] unsettled humours: discontented men. [8] voluntaries: volunteers. [9] spleens: tempers. [10] bottoms: ships. [11] scathe: damage. [12] churlish: rude. [13] circumstance: details. [14] expedition: haste. [15] occasion: necessity.

Enter KING JOHN, ELINOR, BLANCH, BASTARD, LORDS, *and* FORCES.

KING JOHN.

Peace be to France, if France in peace permit
Our just and lineal [1] entrance to our own!
If not, bleed France, and peace ascend to heaven!
Whiles[2] we, God's wrathful agent, do correct[3]
Their proud contempt that beats His peace to heaven.

KING PHILIP.

Peace be to England, if that war return
From France to England, there to live in peace!
England we love; and for that England's sake
With burden of our armour here we sweat.
This toil of ours should be a work of thine;
But thou from loving England art so far,
That thou hast under-wrought[4] his[5] lawful king,
Cut off the sequence of posterity,[6]
Out-faced [7] infant state,[8] and done a rape
Upon the maiden virtue of the crown.
Look here upon thy brother Geffrey's face;—
These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his:
This little abstract[9] doth contain that large
Which died in Geffrey; and the hand of time
Shall draw this brief [10] into as huge a volume.
That Geffrey was thy elder brother born,
And this his son; England was Geffrey's right,
And this is Geffrey's: in the name of God,
How comes it, then, that thou art call'd a king,
When living blood doth in these temples beat,
Which owe[11] the crown that thou o'ermasterest?

KING JOHN.

From whom hast thou this great commission, France,

---

[1] **lineal:** due by right of birth (succession). [2] **Whiles:** while. [3] **correct:** punish. [4] **under-wrought:** undermined. [5] **his:** its. [6] **sequence of posterity:** hereditary succession. [7] **Out-faced:** put down by intimidation. [8] **infant state:** the child king (Arthur). [9] **little abstract:** small edition; summary. [10] **brief:** short document. [11] **owe:** own.

To draw my answer from thy articles?[1]

KING PHILIP.

From that supernal[2] judge, that stirs good thoughts
In any breast of strong authority,
To look into the blots and stains of right.
That judge hath made me guardian to this boy:
Under whose warrant I impeach[3] thy wrong;
And by whose help I mean to chastise it.

KING JOHN.

Alack, thou dost usurp authority.

KING PHILIP.

Excuse,—it is to beat usurping down.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Who is it thou dost call usurper, France?

CONSTANCE.

Let me make answer;—thy usurping son.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Out, insolent! thy bastard shall be king,
That thou mayst be a queen, and check[4] the world!

CONSTANCE.

My bed was ever to thy son as true
As thine was to thy husband; and this boy
Liker in feature[5] to his father Geffrey
Than thou and John in manners,—being as like
As rain to water, or devil to his dam.
My boy a bastard! By my soul, I think
His father never was so true[6] begot:
It cannot be, an if[7] thou wert his mother.

QUEEN ELINOR.

There's a good mother, boy, that blots[8] thy father.

CONSTANCE.

There's a good grandam, boy, that would blot[9] thee.

---

[1] articles: particular items in writing or under discussion. [2] supernal: heavenly. [3] impeach: accuse. [4] check control: an allusion to the game of chess of that time, when the "queen" was the most powerful piece in the game. [5] feature: outward appearance. [6] true: truly. [7] an if: if. [8] blots: puts a stain on. [9] blot: extinguish.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Peace!

BASTARD.

Hear the crier.[1]

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

What the devil art thou?

BASTARD.

One that will play the devil, sir, with you,
An a'[2] may catch your hide and you alone:
You are the hare of whom the proverb[3] goes,
Whose valour plucks dead lions by the beard:
I'll smoke[4] your skin-coat,[5] an[6] I catch you right;
Sirrah, look to't; i'faith, I will, i'faith.

BLANCH.

O, well did he become that lion's robe
That did disrobe the lion of that robe!

BASTARD.

It lies as sightly on the back of him
As great Alcides'[7] shows upon an ass:—
But, ass, I'll take that burden from your back,
Or lay on that shall make your shoulders crack.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

What cracker[8] is this same that deafs our ears
With this abundance of superfluous breath?—
King Philip, determine what we shall do straight.[9]

KING PHILIP.

Women and fools, break off your conference.
King John, this is the very sum of all,—
England and Ireland, Anjou, Touraine, Maine,
In right of Arthur do I claim of thee:
Wilt thou resign them, and lay down thy arms?

KING JOHN.

My life as soon:—I do defy thee, France.—

---

[1] crier: court official who calls for silence. [2] An a': if he. [3] the proverb: "A dead lion even hares insult," or "Hares may pull dead lions by the beard." [4] smoke: thrash. [5] skin-coat: lion's coat (taken from Richard). [6] an: if. [7] Alcides': a reference to the Nemean lion won by Hercules. [8] cracker: boaster; braggart. [9] straight: immediately.

Arthur of Bretagne, yield thee to my hand;
And, out of my dear love, I'll give thee more
Than e'er the coward hand of France can win:
Submit thee, boy.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Come to thy grandam, child.

CONSTANCE.

Do, child, go to it[1] grandam, child;
Give grandam kingdom, and it grandam will
Give it a plum, a cherry, and a fig:
There's a good grandam.

ARTHUR.

Good my mother, peace!
I would that I were low laid in my grave:
I am not worth this coil[2] that's made for me.

QUEEN ELINOR.

His mother shames him so, poor boy, he weeps.

CONSTANCE.

Now shame upon you, whe'r she does or no!
His grandam's wrongs, and not his mother's shames,
Draw those heaven-moving pearls[3] from his poor eyes,
Which heaven shall take in nature of[4] a fee;
Ay, with these crystal beads heaven shall be bribed
To do him justice, and revenge on you.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Thou monstrous slanderer of heaven and earth!

CONSTANCE.

Thou monstrous injurer of heaven and earth!
Call me not slanderer; thou and thine usurp
The dominations,[5] royalties, and rights
Of this oppressed boy: this is thy eld'st son's son,

---

[1] *it*: its.
[2] **coil**: fuss; turmoil.
[3] **pearls**: tears.
[4] **in nature of**: as though it were.
[5] **dominations**: dominions.

Infortunate in nothing but in thee:[1]
Thy sins are visited in this poor child;
The canon of the law[2] is laid on him,
Being but the second generation
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

KING JOHN.

Bedlam,[3] have done.

CONSTANCE.

I have but this to say,—
That he is not only plagued for her sin,
But God hath made her sin and her the plague
On this removed issue,[4] plagued[5] for her,
And with her plague; her sin his injury,
Her injury the beadle[6] to her sin;
All punisht in the person of this child,
And all for her; a plague upon her!

QUEEN ELINOR.

Thou unadvised scold, I can produce
A will that bars the title of thy son.

CONSTANCE.

Ay, who doubts that? a will! a wicked will;
A woman's will; a canker'd grandam's will!

KING PHILIP.

Peace, lady! pause, or be more temperate:
It ill beseems this presence[7] to cry aim[8]
To these ill-tuned repetitions.—
Some trumpet summon hither to the walls
These men of Angiers: let us hear them speak,
Whose title they admit, Arthur's or John's.

Trumpet sounds. Enter CITIZENS *upon the walls.*

FIRST CITIZEN.

Who is it that hath warn'd[9] us to the walls?

---

[1] **Infortunate . . . thee:** that is, Arthur's only misfortune is in being Elinor's grandson. [2] **The canon of the law:** Mosaic law—*see* Exodus 20:5. [3] **Bedlam:** lunatic. [4] **issue:** not a son, but the child of a son. [5] **plagued:** punished. [6] **beadle:** paid official who whipped evildoers. [7] **presence:** assembly. [8] **to cry aim:** that is, to encourage (an expression in archery). [9] **warn'd:** summoned.

KING PHILIP.

'Tis France, for England.

KING JOHN.

England, for itself:—
You men of Angiers, and my loving subjects,—

KING PHILIP.

You loving men of Angiers, Arthur's subjects,
Our trumpet call'd you to this gentle parle,—[1]

KING JOHN.

For our advantage; therefore hear us first.
These flags of France, that are advanced here
Before the eye and prospect[2] of your town,
Have hither marcht to your endamagement:[3]
The cannons have their bowels full of wrath,
And ready mounted are they to spit forth
Their iron indignation 'gainst your walls:
All preparation for a bloody siege
And merciless proceeding by these French
Confronts your city's eyes, your winking[4] gates;
And, but for our approach, those sleeping stones,
That as a waist doth girdle you about,
By the compulsion of their ordinance[5]
By this time from their fixed beds of lime
Had been dishabited,[6] and wide havoc made
For bloody power to rush upon your peace.
But, on the sight of us, your lawful king,—
Who painfully, with much expedient march,
Have brought a countercheck before your gates,
To save unscratcht your city's threaten'd cheeks,—
Behold, the French, amazed, vouchsafe a parle;
And now, instead of bullets wrapt in fire,
To make a shaking fever in your walls,

---

[1] parle: parley.
[2] prospect: range of vision.
[3] endamagement: injury; harm.
[4] winking: closed.
[5] ordinance: cannon; artillery.
[6] dishabited: dislodged; violently removed.

They shoot but calm words, folded up in smoke,
To make a faithless error[1] in your ears:
Which trust accordingly, kind citizens,
And let us in, your king; whose labour'd [2] spirits,
Forwearied [3] in this action of swift speed,
Crave harbourage[4] within your city-walls.

KING PHILIP.

When I have said, make answer to us both.
Lo, in this right hand, whose protection
Is most divinely vow'd upon the right
Of him it holds, stands young Plantagenet,
Son to the elder brother of this man,
And king o'er him, and all that he enjoys:
For this down-trodden[5] equity,[6] we tread
In warlike march these greens before your town
Being no further enemy to you
Than the constraint of hospitable zeal
In the relief of this oppressed child
Religiously provokes. Be pleased, then,
To pay that duty which you truly owe
To him that owes[7] it, namely, this young prince:
And then our arms, like to a muzzled bear,
Save in aspect, hath all offence seal'd up:
Our cannons' malice vainly shall be spent
Against th'invulnerable clouds of heaven;
And with a blessed and unvext retire,[8]
With unhackt swords and helmets all unbruised,
We will bear home that lusty blood again,
Which here we came to spout against your town,
And leave your children, wives, and you in peace.
But if you fondly[9] pass our proffer'd offer,
'Tis not the roundure[10] of your old-faced walls[11]
Can hide you from our messengers of war,[12]

---

[1] a faithless error: disloyal confusion. [2] labour'd: tired. [3] Forwearied: exhausted. [4] harbourage: shelter. [5] down-trodden: trampled to the ground. [6] equity: right. [7] owes: owns. [8] unvext retired: unharassed or orderly departure. [9] fondly: foolishly. [10] roundure: circle. [11] old-faced walls: well-built and venerable walls. [12] messengers of war: fire.

Though all these English and their discipline[1]
Were harbour'd in their rude[2] circumference.
Then, tell us, shall your city call us lord,
In that behalf which we have challenged it?
Or shall we give the signal to our rage,
And stalk in blood to our possession?

FIRST CITIZEN.

In brief, we are the king of England's subjects:
For him, and in his right, we hold this town.

KING JOHN.

Acknowledge, then, the king, and let me in.

FIRST CITIZEN.

That can we not; but he that proves the king,
To him will we prove loyal: till that time
Have we ramm'd up[3] our gates against the world.

KING JOHN.

Doth not the crown of England prove the king?
And if not that, I bring you witnesses,
Twice fifteen thousand hearts of England's breed,—

BASTARD.

Bastards, and else.[4]

KING JOHN.

To verify our title with their lives.

KING PHILIP.

As many and as well-born bloods[5] as those,—

BASTARD.

Some bastards too.

KING PHILIP.

Stand in his face,[6] to contradict his claim.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Till you compound[7] whose right is worthiest,
We for the worthiest hold the right from both.

---

[1] **discipline**: leaders. [2] **rude**: rough. [3] **ramm'd up**: barricaded. [4] **else**: otherwise. [5] **bloods**: men of mettle. [6] **Stand in his face**: confront him, face to face. [7] **compound**: settle; determine.

KING JOHN.

Then God forgive the sin of all those souls
That to their everlasting residence,
Before the dew of evening fall, shall fleet,[1]
In dreadful trial of our kingdom's king!

KING PHILIP.

Amen, amen!—Mount, chevaliers! to arms!

BASTARD.

Saint George, that swinged[2] the dragon, and e'er since
Sits on his horse back at mine hostess' door,[3]
Teach us some fence! [4]—[*to* AUSTRIA] Sirrah, were I at home,
At your den, sirrah, with your lioness,
I'ld set an ox-head to your lion's hide,
And make a monster[5] of you.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Peace! no more.

BASTARD.

O, tremble, for you hear the lion roar!

KING JOHN.

Up higher to the plain; where we'll set forth
In best appointment all our regiments.

BASTARD.

Speed, then, to take advantage of the field.

KING PHILIP.

It shall be so;—[*to* LOUIS] and at the other hill
Command the rest to stand,—God and our right! [6]

[*Exeunt, severally,*[7] *the English and French* KINGS, *&c.*

Here, after excursions,[8] *enter the* HERALD OF FRANCE, *with trumpets, to the gates.*

---

[1] **fleet:** swiftly pass away. [2] **swinged:** scorched; slew. [3] **Sits . . . hostess' door:** *that is,* is painted on the sign above the inn. [4] **fence:** skill in fencing. [5] **a monster:** a freak—an ox-headed lion. [6] **God and our right:** Richard the First is said to have been the first monarch to use *Dieu et Mon Droit*—God and my right arm; here it is improperly used by a Frenchman. [7] ***severally:*** separately. [8] ***excursions:*** sallies and clashes.

FRENCH HERALD.

You men of Angiers, open wide your gates,
And let young Arthur, Duke of Bretagne, in,
Who, by the hand of France, this day hath made
Much work for tears in many an English mother,
Whose sons lie scatter'd on the bleeding ground:
Many a widow's husband grovelling lies,
Coldly embracing the discolour'd earth;
And victory, with little loss, doth play
Upon the dancing banners of the French,
Who are at hand, triumphantly display'd,[1]
To enter conquerors, and to proclaim
Arthur of Bretagne England's king and yours.

Enter ENGLISH HERALD, *with trumpet.*

ENGLISH HERALD.

Rejoice, you men of Angiers, ring your bells;
King John, your king and England's, doth approach,
Commander of this hot malicious[2] day:
Their armours, that marcht hence so silver-bright,
Hither return all gilt[3] with Frenchmen's blood;
There stuck no plume in any English crest
That is removed by a staff [4] of France;
Our colours do return in those same hands
That did display them when we first marcht forth;
And, like a jolly troop of huntsmen, come
Our lusty English, all with purpled hands,
Dyed in the dying slaughter[5] of their foes:
Open your gates, and give the victors way.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Heralds, from off our towers we might behold,
From first to last, the onset and retire[6]

---

[1] **display'd:** spread out on parade. [2] **malicious:** violent.
[3] **gilt:** gilded; reddened. [4] **staff:** lance. [5] **Dyed in the dying slaughter:** an allusion to the custom of hunters dipping their hands in the deer's blood as a trophy. [6] **retire:** withdrawal.

Of both your armies; whose equality
By our best eyes cannot be censured:[1]
Blood hath bought blood, and blows have answer'd blows;
Strength matcht with strength, and power confronted power:
Both are alike; and both alike we like.
One must prove greatest: while they weigh so even,
We hold our town for neither; yet for both.

Enter the two KINGS, *with their powers, severally.*

KING JOHN.

France, hast thou yet more blood to cast away?
Say, shall the current of our right run on?
Whose passage, vext with thy impediment,
Shall leave his native channel, and o'erswell
With course disturb'd even thy confining shores,
Unless thou let his silver water keep
A peaceful progress[2] to the ocean.

KING PHILIP.

England, thou hast not saved one drop of blood,
In this hot trial, more than we of France;
Rather, lost more: and by this hand [3] I swear,
That sways the earth this climate[4] overlooks,
Before we will lay down our just-borne[5] arms,
We'll put thee down, 'gainst whom these arms we bear,
Or add a royal number to the dead,[6]
Gracing the scroll that tells of this war's loss
With slaughter coupled to the name of kings.

BASTARD.

Ha, majesty! how high thy glory[7] towers,
When the rich blood of kings is set on fire!

---

[1] **censured:** questioned. [2] **progress:** course. [3] **this hand:** Arthur's hand, which the king raises. [4] **climate:** region of the sky. [5] **just-borne:** borne in a just cause. [6] **a royal number to the dead:** that is, a king's name as one item in the list of dead. [7] **glory:** splendor; magnificence.

O, now doth Death line[1] his dead chaps[2] with steel;
The swords of soldiers are his teeth, his fangs;
And now he feasts, mousing[3] the flesh of men,
In undetermined differences of kings.—
Why stand these royal fronts[4] amazed thus?
Cry 'havoc,' [5] kings! back to the stained field,
You equal-potent,[6] fiery-kindled spirits!
Then let confusion[7] of one part[8] confirm
The other's peace; till then, blows, blood, and death!

KING JOHN.

Whose party do the townsmen yet[9] admit?

KING PHILIP.

Speak, citizens, for England; who's your king?

FIRST CITIZEN.

The king of England, when we know the king.

KING PHILIP.

Know him in us, that here hold up his right.

KING JOHN.

In us, that are our own great deputy,
And bear possession of our person here;
Lord of our presence,[10] Angiers, and of you.

FIRST CITIZEN.

A greater power than we denies all this;
And till it be undoubted, we do lock
Our former scruple in our strong-barr'd gates;
Kings of our fears,[11] until our fears, resolved,
Be by some certain king purged and deposed.

BASTARD.

By heaven, these scroyles[12] of Angiers flout[13] you, kings,
And stand securely on their battlements,

---

[1] **line**: strengthen. [2] **chaps**: jaws. [3] **mousing**: worrying; tearing. [4] **fronts**: faces. [5] **Cry 'havoc'**: command slaughter for all, with no quarter given. [6] **potent**: potentates. [7] **confusion**: overthrow. [8] **part**: party; side. [9] **yet**: now. [10] **presence**: person. [11] **Kings of our fears**: made kings by our fears. [12] **scroyles**: scoundrels; wretches. [13] **flout**: mock.

As in a theatre, whence they gape and point
At your industrious[1] scenes and acts of death.
Your royal presences be ruled by me:—
Do like the mutines[2] of Jerusalem,
Be friends awhile, and both conjointly bend [3]
Your sharpest deeds of malice on this town:
By east and west let France and England mount
Their battering cannon, charged to the mouths,
Till their soul-fearing[4] clamours have brawl'd down[5]
The flinty ribs of this contemptuous city:
I'ld play incessantly upon these jades,[6]
Even till unfenced [7] desolation
Leave them as naked as the vulgar air.[8]
That done, dissever your united strengths,
And part your mingled colours once again;
Turn face to face, and bloody point to point;
Then, in a moment, Fortune shall cull forth
One of one side her happy minion,[9]
To whom in favour she shall give the day,
And kiss him with a glorious victory.
How like you this wild counsel, mighty states? [10]
Smacks it not something of the policy? [11]

KING JOHN.

Now, by the sky that hangs above our heads,
I like it well.—France, shall we knit our powers,
And lay this Angiers even with the ground;
Then, after, fight who shall be king of it?

BASTARD.

An if thou hast the mettle of a king,—
Being wrong'd, as we are, by this peevish[12] town,—
Turn thou the mouth of thy artillery,
As we will ours, against these saucy walls;

---

[1] **industrious:** laborious. [2] **mutines:** mutineers; factions in Jerusalem united to resist the Romans (70 A.D.). [3] **bend:** direct. [4] **soul-fearing:** soul-frightening. [5] **brawl'd down:** this may be an allusion to the trumpets of Joshua, which toppled the walls of Jericho. [6] **jades:** wretches. [7] **unfenced:** unfortified. [8] **naked . . . air:** completely defenseless. [9] **minion:** favorite. [10] **states:** kings. [11] **the policy:** political cunning. [12] **peevish:** spiteful.

And when that we have dasht them to the ground,
Why, then defy each other, and, pell-mell,
Make work upon ourselves, for heaven or hell.[1]

KING PHILIP.

Let it be so.—Say, where will you assault?

KING JOHN.

We from the west will send destruction
Into this city's bosom.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

I from the north.

KING PHILIP.

Our thunder[2] from the south
Shall rain their drift of bullets on this town.

BASTARD [*aside*].

O prudent discipline! [3] From north to south,—
Austria and France shoot in each other's mouth:
I'll stir them to it.—Come, away, away!

FIRST CITIZEN.

Hear us, great kings: vouchsafe awhile to stay,
And I shall show you peace and fair-faced league;
Win you this city without stroke or wound;
Rescue those breathing lives to die in beds,
That here come sacrifices for the field:
Persever not, but hear me, mighty kings.

KING JOHN.

Speak on, with favour; we are bent[4] to hear.

FIRST CITIZEN.

That daughter there of Spain, the Lady Blanch,
Is niece to England:[5]—look upon the years
Of Louis the Dauphin and that lovely maid:
If lusty love should go in quest of beauty,
Where should he find it fairer than in Blanch?

---

[1] **for heaven or hell:** to the death.
[2] **thunder:** cannon.
[3] **discipline:** military science (irony).
[4] **bent:** inclined.
[5] **niece to England:** the Lady Blanch was the daughter of Alphonso IX, King of Castile, who was married to King John's sister.

If zealous[1] love should go in search of virtue,
Where should he find it purer than in Blanch?
If love ambitious sought a match of birth,
Whose veins bound [2] richer blood than Lady Blanch?
Such as she is, in beauty, virtue, birth,
Is the young Dauphin every way complete,[3]—
If not complete, O, say he is not she;
And she again wants[4] nothing, to name want,
If want it be not, that she is not he:
He is the half part of a blessed man,
Left to be finished by such a she;
And she a fair divided excellence,
Whose fulness of perfection lies in him.
O, two such silver currents, when they join,
Do glorify the banks that bound them in;
And two such shores to two such streams made one,
Two such controlling bounds shall you be, kings,
To these two princes, if you marry them.[5]
This union shall do more than battery[6] can
To our fast-closed gates; for, at this match,
With swifter spleen[7] than powder can enforce,
The mouth of passage shall we fling wide ope,
And give you entrance: but without this match,[8]
The sea enraged is not half so deaf,
Lions more confident, mountains and rocks
More free from motion; no, not Death himself
In mortal fury half so peremptory,[9]
As we to keep this city.

BASTARD.

Here's a stay,[10]
That shakes the rotten carcass of old Death

---

[1] **zealous:** pious. [2] **bound:** hold; enclose. [3] **complete:** endowed. [4] **wants:** lacks. [5] **marry them:** that is, marry them to each other. [6] **battery:** bombardment. [7] **With swifter spleen:** "with a passion of desire more swift"—Theobald. [8] **match:** marriage, with a play on *match* for igniting powder. [9] **peremptory:** resolved. [10] **a stay:** an interruption: a check.

Out of his rags! Here's a large mouth, indeed,
That spits forth death and mountains, rocks and seas;
Talks as familiarly of roaring lions
As maids of thirteen do of puppy-dogs!
What cannoneer begot this lusty blood?
He speaks plain cannon,—fire and smoke and bounce;[1]
He gives the bastinado[2] with his tongue:
Our ears are cudgell'd; not a word of his
But buffets[3] better than a fist of France:
Zounds,[4] I was never so bethumpt with words
Since I first call'd my brother's father dad.

QUEEN ELINOR [*aside to* KING JOHN].

Son, list to this conjunction, make this match;
Give with our niece a dowry large enough:
For by this knot thou shalt so surely tie
Thy now-unsured [5] assurance to the crown,
That yon green boy shall have no sun to ripe
The bloom that promiseth a mighty fruit.
I see a yielding in the looks of France;
Mark, how they whisper: urge them while their souls
Are capable of [6] this ambition,
Lest zeal,[7] now melted by the windy breath
Of soft petitions, pity, and remorse,[8]
Cool and congeal again to what it was.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Why answer not the double majesties
This friendly treaty[9] of our threaten'd town?

KING PHILIP.

Speak England first, that hath been forward first
To speak unto this city: what say you?

---

[1] **bounce:** noise. [2] **the bastinado:** a sound lashing. [3] **buffets:** beats. [4] **Zounds:** by God's wounds. [5] **now-unsured:** now-insecure. [6] **capable of:** apt to be moved by. [7] **zeal:** Philip's eagerness for the proposed alliance (a disputed passage). [8] **remorse:** compassion. [9] **treaty:** proposal.

KING JOHN.

If that the Dauphin there, thy princely son,
Can in this book of beauty read 'I love,'
Her dowry shall weigh equal with a queen:
For Anjou, and fair Touraine, Maine, Poictiers,
And all that we upon this side the sea—[1]
Except this city now by us besieged—
Find liable[2] to our crown and dignity,
Shall gild her bridal bed; and make her rich
In titles, honours, and promotions,
As she in beauty, education, blood,
Holds hand [3] with any princess of the world.

KING PHILIP.

What say'st thou, boy? look in the lady's face.

LOUIS.

I do, my lord; and in her eye I find
A wonder, or a wondrous miracle,
The shadow[4] of myself form'd in her eye;
Which, being but the shadow of your son,
Becomes a sun, and makes your son a shadow:
I do protest I never loved myself,
Till now infixed I beheld myself
Drawn in the flattering table[5] of her eye.

[*Whispers with* BLANCH.

BASTARD [*aside*].

Drawn in the flattering table of her eye!—
Hang'd in the frowning wrinkle of her brow!—
And quarter'd [6] in her heart!—he doth espy
Himself love's traitor:—this is pity now,
That, hang'd and drawn and quarter'd, there should be
In such a love so vile a lout as he.

BLANCH.

My uncle's will in this respect is mine:

---

[1] **sea:** i.e., the English channel. [2] **liable:** subject. [3] **Holds hand:** compares favorably. [4] **shadow:** reflection. [5] **table:** tablet (on which a picture is painted). [6] **quarter'd:** lodged; with a quibble on "hanged, drawn, and quartered."

If he see aught in you that makes him like,
That any thing he sees, which moves his liking,
I can with ease translate it to my will;[1]
Or if you will, to speak more properly,
I will enforce it easily to my love.
Further I will not flatter you, my lord,
That all I see in you is worthy[2] love,
Than this,—that nothing do I see in you,
Though churlish[3] thoughts themselves should be your judge,
That I can find should merit any hate.

KING JOHN.

What say these young ones?—What say you, my niece?

BLANCH.

That she is bound in honour still [4] to do
What you in wisdom still vouchsafe to say.

KING JOHN.

Speak then, Prince Dauphin; can you love this lady?

LOUIS.

Nay, ask me if I can refrain from love;
For I do love her most unfeignedly.

KING JOHN.

Then do I give Volquessen, Touraine, Maine,
Poictiers, and Anjou, these five provinces,
With her to thee; and this addition more,
Full thirty thousand marks of English coin.—
Philip of France, if thou be pleased withal,[5]
Command thy son and daughter to join hands.

KING PHILIP.

It likes[6] us well.—Young princes, close your hands.

---

[1] I can . . . will: I am able to submit my will to his (King John's).
[2] worthy: worthy of.
[3] churlish: sparing of praise; niggardly.
[4] still: always.
[5] withal: with all this.
[6] likes: pleases.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

And your lips too; for I am well assured
That I did so when I was first assured.[1]

KING PHILIP.

Now, citizens of Angiers, ope your gates,
Let in that amity which you have made;
For at Saint Mary's chapel[2] presently
The rites of marriage shall be solemnized.—
Is not the Lady Constance in this troop?
I know she is not; for this match made up
Her presence would have interrupted much:
Where is she and her son? tell me, who knows.

LOUIS.

She is sad and passionate[3] at your highness' tent.

KING PHILIP.

And, by my faith, this league that we have made
Will give her sadness very little cure.—
Brother of England, how may we content
This widow lady? In her right we came;
Which we, God knows, have turn'd another way,
To our own vantage.

KING JOHN.

We will heal up all;
For we'll create young Arthur Duke of Bretagne
And Earl of Richmond; and this rich fair town
We make him lord of.—Call the Lady Constance;
Some speedy messenger bid her repair
To our solemnity:[4]—I trust we shall,
If not fill up the measure of her will,
Yet in some measure satisfy her so
That we shall stop her exclamation.[5]
Go we, as well as haste will suffer us,
To this unlookt-for,[6] unprepared pomp.

---

[1] **assured:** engaged; betrothed. [2] **Saint Mary's chapel:** supposedly the abbey of Ronceray, dedicated to St. Mary in 1028. [3] **passionate:** full of lamentations. [4] **solemnity:** marriage ceremony. [5] **exclamation:** loud complaining. [6] **unlookt-for:** unexpected.

[*Exeunt all but* BASTARD.

Mad world! mad kings! mad composition! [1]
John, to stop Arthur's title in the whole,
Hath willingly departed [2] with a part;
And France,—whose armour conscience buckled on,
Whom zeal and charity brought to the field
As God's own soldier,—rounded [3] in the ear
With that same purpose-changer, that sly devil;
That broker,[4] that still breaks the pate of faith;
That daily break-vow;[5] he that wins of all,
Of kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids,—
Who having no external thing to lose
But the word 'maid,' cheats the poor maid of that,
That smooth-faced [6] gentleman, tickling commodity,[7]—
Commodity, the bias of the world;
The world, who of itself is peised [8] well,
Made to run even upon even ground,
Till this advantage, this vile-drawing[9] bias,
This sway[10] of motion, this Commodity,
Makes it take head [11] from all indifferency,[12]
From all direction, purpose, course, intent:
And this same bias, this Commodity,
This bawd, this broker, this all-changing word,
Clapt on the outward eye of fickle France,
Hath drawn him from his own determined aid,
From a resolved [13] and honourable war,
To a most base and vile-concluded peace.—
And why rail I on this Commodity?
But for because[14] he hath not woo'd me yet:

---

[1] **composition:** agreement. [2] **departed:** parted. [3] **rounded:** whispered. [4] **broker:** agent; go-between. [5] **break-vow:** breaker of vows. [6] **smooth-faced:** deceitful. [7] **tickling commodity:** flattery; self-interest. [8] **peised:** poised. [9] **vile-drawing:** attracting to evil. [10] **sway:** direction. [11] **take head:** take all power. [12] **indifferency:** absence of bias. [13] **resolved:** determined upon. [14] **But for because:** merely because.

Not that I have the power to clutch my hand,[1]
When his fair angels[2] would salute my palm;
But for my hand, as unattempted [3] yet,
Like a poor beggar, raileth on[4] the rich.
Well, whiles[5] I am a beggar, I will rail,
And say, There is no sin but to be rich:
And being rich, my virtue then shall be,
To say, There is no vice but beggary:
Since kings break faith upon[6] commodity,
Gain, be my lord,—for I will worship thee! [*Exit.*

---

[1] **clutch my hand:** close my hand; refuse the bribe.
[2] **fair angels:** a pun on the gold coin "angel," worth ten shillings.
[3] **unattempted:** untempted.
[4] **raileth on:** rants against.
[5] **whiles:** while.
[6] **upon:** because of.

King John

ACT 3

ACT III

PANDULPH, a papal legate, arrives at the pavilion where both royal parties are installed and asks John why he has refused to accept the Pope's appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. On receiving a defiant answer, he excommunicates him and threatens to excommunicate Philip as well, unless France breaks with England. Negotiations cease and fighting resumes. Angiers is taken. The Bastard kills Limoges, Duke of Austria, and John captures Arthur, whom he turns over to Hubert with strong hints that the boy is to be killed. Constance is demented at the loss of her son and Philip is discouraged. But Pandulph urges Louis to make a bid for the English throne through Blanch. He predicts that John will dispose of Arthur and that his action will so alienate the people that they will welcome the French.

ACT III. SCENE I.

France. The French KING'S *tent.*

Enter CONSTANCE, ARTHUR, *and* SALISBURY.

CONSTANCE.

Gone to be married! gone to swear a peace!
False blood to false blood join'd! gone to be friends!
Shall Louis have Blanch? and Blanch those provinces?
It is not so; thou hast misspoke, misheard;
Be well advised, tell o'er thy tale again:
It cannot be; thou dost but say 'tis so:
I trust I may not trust thee; for thy word
Is but the vain breath of a common man:
Believe me, I do not believe thee, man;
I have a king's oath to the contrary.
Thou shalt be punisht for thus frighting me,
For I am sick, and capable of fears;
Oppresst with wrongs, and therefore full of fears;
A widow, husbandless, subject to fears;
A woman, naturally born to fears;
And though thou now confess thou didst but jest,

With my vext spirits I cannot take a truce,[1]
But they will quake and tremble all this day.
What dost thou mean by shaking of thy head?
Why dost thou look so sadly on my son?
What means that hand upon that breast of thine?
Why holds thine eye that lamentable rheum,[2]
Like a proud [3] river peering o'er[4] his bounds?
Be these sad signs confirmers of thy words?
Then speak again,—not all thy former tale,
But this one word, whether thy tale be true.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

As true as I believe you think them[5] false
That give you cause to prove my saying true.

CONSTANCE.

O, if thou teach me to believe this sorrow,
Teach thou this sorrow how to make me die;
And let belief and life encounter so
As doth the fury of two desperate men,
Which in the very meeting fall and die!—
Louis marry Blanch! O boy, then where art thou?
France friend with England! what becomes of me?—
Fellow, be gone: I cannot brook[6] thy sight;
This news hath made thee a most ugly man.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

What other harm have I, good lady, done,
But spoke the harm that is by others done?

CONSTANCE.

Which harm within itself so heinous is,
As it makes harmful all that speak of it.

ARTHUR.

I do beseech you, madam, be content.[7]

---

[1] **take a truce:** make peace (a common expression). [2] **that lamentable rheum:** those tears of sorrow. [3] **proud:** swollen. [4] **peering o'er his bounds:** overflowing its banks. [5] **them:** i.e., the people who cause her Constance's grief. [6] **brook:** endure. [7] **content:** satisfied (with the turn of events).

CONSTANCE.

If thou, that bidd'st me be content, wert grim,
Ugly, and slanderous[1] to thy mother's womb,
Full of unpleasing blots[2] and sightless[3] stains,
Lame, foolish, crooked, swart,[4] prodigious,[5]
Patcht with foul moles and eye-offending marks,
I would not care, I then would be content;
For then I should not love thee; no, nor thou
Become thy great birth, nor deserve a crown.
But thou art fair; and at thy birth, dear boy,
Nature and Fortune join'd to make thee great:
Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast
And with the half-blown rose: but Fortune, O!
She is corrupted, changed, and won from thee;
Sh' adulterates[6] hourly with thine uncle John;
And with her golden hand [7] hath pluckt on[8] France
To tread down fair respect of sovereignty,
And made his majesty the bawd to theirs.
France is a bawd to Fortune and King John,
That strumpet Fortune, that usurping John!
Tell me, thou fellow, is not France forsworn?
Envenom[9] him with words: or get thee gone,
And leave those woes alone which I alone
Am bound to under-bear.[10]

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Pardon me, madam,
I may not go without you to the kings.

CONSTANCE.

Thou mayst, thou shalt; I will not go with thèe.
I will instruct my sorrows to be proud;
For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout,[11]
To me, and to the state[12] of my great grief,

---

[1] slanderous: a disgrace. [2] blots: disfigurements; blemishes. [3] sightless: unsightly; ugly. [4] swart: swarthy. [5] prodigious: a monster; an omen of bad fortune. [6] adulterates: commits adultery. [7] with her golden hand: with bribes. [8] pluckt on: incited. [9] Envenom: poison. [10] under-bear: bear; endure. [11] stout: hard. [12] state: condition; throne.

Let kings assemble; for my grief's so great,
That no supporter but the huge firm earth
Can hold it up: here I and sorrows sit;
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.
[*Seats herself on the ground.*

Enter KING JOHN, KING PHILIP, LOUIS, BLANCH, ELINOR, BASTARD, AUSTRIA, *and* ATTENDANTS.

KING PHILIP.

'Tis true, fair daughter; and this blessed day
Ever in France shall be kept festival;[1]
To solemnize this day the glorious sun
Stays[2] in his course, and plays the alchemist,[3]
Turning with splendour of his precious eye
The meagre cloddy earth to glittering gold:
The yearly course that brings this day about
Shall never see it but a holiday.

CONSTANCE.

A wicked day, and not a holy day!— [*Rising.*
What hath this day deserved? what hath it done,
That it in golden letters should be set
Among the high tides[4] in the calendar?
Nay, rather turn this day out of the week,
This day of shame, oppression, perjury:
Or, if it must stand still,[5] let wives with child
Pray that their burdens may not fall this day,
Lest that their hopes prodigiously be crost:[6]
But[7] on this day let seamen fear no wrack;[8]
No bargains break that are not this day made:
This day, all things begun come to ill end,—
Yes, faith itself to hollow falsehood change!

KING PHILIP.

By heaven, lady, you shall have no cause

---

[1] **festival:** as a feast day. [2] **Stays:** stands still. [3] **plays the alchemist:** the alchemist was supposed to have the power to change base metals into gold. [4] **high tides:** times to be observed above all others. [5] **stand still:** still stand. [6] **prodigiously be crost:** "be disappointed by the production of a prodigy, a monster"—Steevens. [7] **But:** except. [8] **wrack:** wreck; shipwreck.

To curse the fair proceedings of this day:
Have I not pawn'd to you my majesty?

CONSTANCE.

You have beguiled me with a counterfeit
Resembling majesty; which, being toucht and tried,[1]
Proves valueless: you are forsworn, forsworn;
You came in arms to spill mine enemies' blood,
But now in arms[2] you strengthen it with yours:
The grappling vigour and rough frown of war
Is cold in amity and painted peace,
And our oppression[3] hath made up this league.
Arm, arm, you heavens, against these perjured kings!
A widow cries; be husband to me, heavens!
Let not the hours of this ungodly day
Wear out the day in peace; but, ere sunset,
Set armed discord 'twixt these perjured kings!
Hear me, O, hear me!

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Lady Constance, peace!

CONSTANCE.

War! war! no peace! peace is to me a war.
O Limoges! O Austria! thou dost shame
That bloody spoil:[4] thou slave, thou wretch, thou coward!
Thou little valiant, great in villainy!
Thou ever strong upon the stronger side!
Thou Fortune's champion that dost never fight
But when her humorous ladyship[5] is by
To teach thee safety! thou art perjured too,
And sooth'st up[6] greatness. What a fool art thou,
A ramping[7] fool, to brag, and stamp, and swear,
Upon my party![8] Thou cold-blooded slave,
Hast thou not spoke like thunder on my side?

---

[1] **being toucht and tried:** having the touchstone applied to it (a method of testing). [2] **in arms . . . in arms:** with armies . . . with embraces. [3] **our oppression:** your oppression of us. [4] **That bloody spoil:** i.e., the lion skin belonging to Richard. [5] **her humorous ladyship:** capricious Fortune. [6] **sooth'st up:** flatter. [7] **ramping:** seeking what he can devour. [8] **Upon my party:** against my side.

Been sworn my soldier? bidding me depend
Upon thy stars, thy fortune and thy strength?
And dost thou now fall over[1] to my foes?
Thou wear a lion's hide! doff it for shame,
And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant[2] limbs.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

O, that a man should speak those words to me!

BASTARD.

And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Thou darest not say so, villain, for thy life.

BASTARD.

And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs.

KING JOHN.

We like not this; thou dost forget thyself.

KING PHILIP.

Here comes the holy legate of the Pope.

Enter PANDULPH, *attended.*

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Hail, you anointed deputies of heaven!
To thee, King John, my holy errand is.
I Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal,
And from Pope Innocent the legate here,
Do in his name religiously demand,
Why thou against the church, our holy mother,
So wilfully dost spurn,[3] and, force perforce,[4]
Keep Stephen Langton,[5] chosen archbishop
Of Canterbury, from that holy see?
This, in our foresaid holy father's name,
Pope Innocent, I do demand of thee.

KING JOHN.

What earthly name to interrogatories
Can task the free breath of a sacred king? [6]

---

[1] **fall over:** desert. [2] **recreant:** cowardly; faithless. [3] **spurn:** oppose with contempt. [4] **force perforce:** by violent constraint. [5] **Stephen Langton:** an appointee of the Pope's whom King John refused to recognize. [6] **What earthly . . . king:** what power on earth can question and command an answer from a God-anointed king.

Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
So slight, unworthy, and ridiculous,
To charge me to an answer, as the Pope.
Tell him this tale; and from the mouth of England
Add thus much more,—that no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll [1] in our dominions;
But as we, under heaven, are supreme head,
So, under Him, that great supremacy,
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
Without th'assistance of a mortal hand:
So tell the Pope; all reverence set apart[2]
To him and his usurpt authority.[3]

KING PHILIP.

Brother of England, you blaspheme in this.

KING JOHN.

Though you, and all the kings of Christendom,
Are led so grossly[4] by this meddling priest,[5]
Dreading the curse that money may buy out;[6]
And by the merit of vile gold, dross, dust,
Purchase corrupted pardon of a man,
Who in that sale sells pardon from himself;[7]
Though you and all the rest, so grossly led,
This juggling witchcraft with revenue cherish;[8]
Yet I, alone, alone do me oppose
Against the Pope, and count his friends my foes.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Then, by the lawful power that I have,
Thou shalt stand cursed and excommunicate:[9]
And blessed shall he be that doth revolt
From his allegiance to an heretic;[10]
And meritorious shall that hand be call'd,
Canonized,[11] and worshipt as a saint,
That takes away by any secret course

---

[1] **tithe or toll:** receive revenues through taxes. [2] **set apart:** being set apart. [3] **usurpt authority:** unlawfully held power. [4] **grossly:** foolishly. [5] **this meddling priest:** i.e., the pope. [6] **buy out:** pardon. [7] **Who . . . himself:** who by that sale denies himself absolution for his sins. [8] **cherish:** cling to and help along. [9] **excommunicate:** excommunicated [10] **an heretic:** King John. [11] **Canonized:** glorified, sanctified.

Thy hateful life.

CONSTANCE.

O, lawful let it be
That I have room with Rome[1] to curse awhile!
Good father cardinal, cry thou amen
To my keen[2] curses; for without my wrong
There is no tongue hath power to curse him right.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

There's law and warrant, lady, for my curse.

CONSTANCE.

And for mine too: when law can do no right,
Let it be lawful that law bar no wrong:
Law cannot give my child his kingdom here;
For he that holds his kingdom holds the law:
Therefore, since law itself is perfect wrong,
How can the law forbid my tongue to curse?

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Philip of France, on peril of a curse,
Let go the hand of that arch-heretic;
And raise the power of France upon his head,[3]
Unless he do submit himself to Rome.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Look'st thou pale, France? do not let go thy hand.

CONSTANCE.

Look to that, devil; lest that France repent,
And by disjoining hands, hell lose a soul.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

King Philip, listen to the cardinal.

BASTARD.

And hang a calf's-skin on his recreant limbs.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Well, ruffian, I must pocket up these wrongs,[4]
Because—

---

[1] **room with Rome:** license with the pope; this is one of Shakespeare's punning rhymes, since Rome was then pronounced by many people as *room*.

[2] **keen:** bitter.

[3] **upon his head:** against him.

[4] **pocket up these wrongs:** ignore these insults.

BASTARD.

Your breeches best may carry them.

KING JOHN.

Philip, what say'st thou to the cardinal?

CONSTANCE.

What should he say, but as the cardinal?

LOUIS.

Bethink you, father; for the difference
Is, purchase of a heavy curse from Rome,
Or the light loss of England for a friend:
Forgo the easier.

BLANCH.

That's the curse of Rome.

CONSTANCE.

O Louis, stand fast! the devil tempts thee here
In likeness of a new untrimmed bride.[1]

BLANCH.

The Lady Constance speaks not from her faith,
But from her need.

CONSTANCE.

O, if thou grant my need,
Which only lives but by the death of faith,
That need must needs infer[2] this principle,—
That faith would live again by death of need!
O, then, tread down my need, and faith mounts up;
Keep my need up, and faith is trodden down!

KING JOHN.

The king is moved,[3] and answers not to this.

CONSTANCE.

O, be removed from him, and answer well!

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Do so, King Philip, hang[4] no more in doubt.

---

[1] **new untrimmed bride:** virgin bride (this phrase has been much disputed).
[2] **infer:** imply.
[3] **moved:** swayed.
[4] **hang:** hesitate.

BASTARD.

Hang nothing but a calf's-skin, most sweet lout.

KING PHILIP.

I am perplext, and know not what to say.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

What canst thou say but will perplex thee more,
If thou stand excommunicate and cursed?

KING PHILIP.

Good reverend father, make my person yours,[1]
And tell me how you would bestow yourself.[2]
This royal hand and mine are newly knit,
And the conjunction of our inward souls
Married in league, coupled and linkt together
With all religious strength and sacred vows;
The latest breath that gave the sound of words
Was deep-sworn faith, peace, amity, true love
Between our kingdoms and our royal selves;
And even before this truce, but new before,—
No longer than we well could wash our hands,
To clap this royal bargain up of peace,—[3]
Heaven knows, they were besmear'd and overstain'd
With slaughter's pencil,[4] where revenge did paint
The fearful difference[5] of incensed kings:
And shall these hands, so lately purged of blood,
So newly join'd in love, so strong in both,
Unyoke this seizure and this kind regreet? [6]
Play fast and loose[7] with faith? so jest with heaven,
Make such unconstant children of ourselves,
As now again to snatch our palm from palm;[8]
Unswear faith sworn; and on the marriage-bed
Of smiling peace to march a bloody host,
And make a riot on the gentle brow

---

[1] **make my person yours:** put yourself in my place. [2] **bestow yourself:** behave, act. [3] **To clap . . . peace:** to clasp hands on this agreement for peace. [4] **pencil:** small paintbrush. [5] **difference:** dissension. [6] **regreet:** return greeting. [7] **Play fast and loose:** cheat; a gambling game in which bets were made as to whether knots tied in a handkerchief were fast or loose. [8] **palm . . . palm:** hand . . . *symbol of peace.*

Of true sincerity? O, holy sir,
My reverend father, let it not be so!
Out of your grace devise, ordain, impose
Some gentle order; and then we shall be blest
To do your pleasure, and continue friends.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

All form is formless, order orderless,
Save what is opposite[1] to England's love.
Therefore, to arms! be champion of our church!
Or let the church, our mother, breathe her curse,—
A *mother's curse,—on her revolting son.*
France, thou mayst hold a serpent by the tongue,
A chafed[2] lion by the mortal[3] paw,
A fasting tiger safer by the tooth,
Than keep in peace that hand which thou dost hold.

KING PHILIP.

I may disjoin[4] my hand, but not my faith.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

So makest thou faith an enemy to faith;[5]
And, like a civil war, sett'st oath to oath,
Thy tongue against thy tongue.[6] O, let thy vow
First made to heaven, first be to heaven perform'd,—
That is, to be the champion of our church!
What since thou sworest[7] is sworn against thyself,
And may not be performed by thyself:
For that which thou hast sworn to do amiss
Is not amiss when it is truly done;[8]
And being not done, where doing tends to ill,
The truth is then most done, not doing it:
The better act of purposes mistook
Is to mistake again; though indirect,[9]

---

[1] **opposite**: opposed. [2] **chafed**: enraged. [3] **mortal**: deadly. [4] **disjoin**: unclasp. [5] **So makest . . . faith**: that is, you make your loyalty to John an enemy to your loyalty to the church. [6] **Thy tongue . . . tongue**: your word against your word. [7] **What since thou sworest**: whatever you have sworn after your original vow to the church. [8] **truly done**: done as truth requires it be done. [9] **indirect**: unjust.

Yet indirection thereby grows direct,
And falsehood falsehood cures; as fire cools fire
Within the scorched veins of one new-burn'd.
It is religion that doth make vows kept;
But thou hast sworn against religion:
By what thou swear'st against the thing thou swear'st;
And makest an oath the surety for thy truth
Against an oath: the truth thou art unsure
To swear, swears only not to be forsworn;
Else what a mockery should it be to swear!
But thou dost swear only to be forsworn;
And most forsworn, to keep what thou dost swear.
Therefore thy later vows against thy first
Is in thyself rebellion to thyself;
And better conquest never canst thou make
Than arm[1] thy constant and thy nobler parts
Against these giddy loose suggestions:[2]
Upon[3] which better part our prayers come in,
If thou vouchsafe them;[4] but if not, then know
The peril of our curses light on thee,
So heavy as[5] thou shalt not shake them off,
But in despair die under their black weight.

ARCHDUKE OF AUSTRIA.

Rebellion, flat[6] rebellion!

BASTARD.

Will't not be?
Will not a calf's-skin stop that mouth of thine?

LOUIS.

Father, to arms!

BLANCH.

Upon thy wedding day?
Against the blood that thou hast married?

---

[1] arm: to arm. [2] giddy loose suggestions: unrestrained temptations. [3] Upon: in support of. [4] If thou vouchsafe them: if you choose to accept them on the conditions stated. [5] as: that. [6] flat: outright.

What, shall our feast be kept with slaughter'd men?
Shall braying trumpets and loud churlish drums,—
Clamours of hell,—be measures[1] to our pomp?
O husband, hear me!—ay, alack, how new
Is husband in my mouth!—even for that name,
Which till this time my tongue did ne'er pronounce,
Upon my knee I beg, go not to arms
Against mine uncle.

CONSTANCE.

O, upon my knee,
Made hard with kneeling, I do pray to thee,
Thou virtuous Dauphin, alter not the doom[2]
Forethought[3] by heaven!

BLANCH.

Now shall I see thy love: what motive[4] may
Be stronger with thee than the name of wife?

CONSTANCE.

That which upholdeth him that thee upholds,
His honour:—O, thine honour, Louis, thine honour!

LOUIS.

I muse[5] your majesty doth seem so cold,
When such profound respects[6] do pull you on.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

I will denounce[7] a curse upon his head.

KING PHILIP.

Thou shalt not need.—England, I will fall from[8] thee.

CONSTANCE.

O fair return of banisht majesty!

---

[1] **measures:** music for dancing. [2] **doom:** judgment. [3] **Fore-thought:** predestined. [4] **motive:** moving force. [5] **muse:** wonder. [6] **profound respects:** grave considerations. [7] **denounce:** proclaim; declare. [8] **fall from:** desert.

QUEEN ELINOR.

O foul revolt of French inconstancy!

KING JOHN.

France, thou shalt rue this hour within this hour.

BASTARD.

Old Time the clock-setter, that bald sexton[1] Time,
Is it as he will? [2] well, then, France shall rue.

BLANCH.

The sun's o'ercast with blood: fair day, adieu!
Which is the side that I must go withal? [3]
I am with both: each army hath a hand;
And in their rage, I having hold of both,
They whirl asunder and dismember me.
Husband, I cannot pray that thou mayst win;
Uncle, I needs must pray that thou mayst lose;
Father,[4] I may not wish the fortune thine;
Grandam,[5] I will not wish thy wishes thrive:
Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose;
Assured loss before the match be play'd.

LOUIS.

Lady, with me; with me thy fortune lies.

BLANCH.

There where my fortune lives, there my life dies.

KING JOHN.

Cousin, go draw[6] our puissance[7] together. [*Exit* BASTARD.
France, I am burn'd up with inflaming wrath;
A rage whose heat hath this condition,
That nothing can allay, nothing but blood,—[8]
The blood, the dearest-valued blood of France.

---

[1] **sexton:** gravedigger and bell-ringer of a church. [2] **Is it as he will?:** is that the way he wants it? [3] **withal:** with. [4] **Father:** Blanch's father-in-law, King Philip. [5] **Grandam:** Queen Elinor. [6] **draw:** gather. [7] **puissance:** forces; army. [8] **blood:** the spilling of blood.

KING PHILIP.

Thy rage shall burn thee up, and thou shalt turn
To ashes, ere our blood shall quench that fire:
Look to thyself, thou art in jeopardy.

KING JOHN.

No more than he that threats.[1]—To arms let's hie! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The same. Plains near Angiers.

Alarums, excursions. Enter BASTARD, *with* AUSTRIA'S *head.*

BASTARD.

Now, by my life this day[2] grows wondrous hot;
Some airy devil[3] hovers in the sky,
And pours down mischief.—Austria's head lie there,
While Philip breathes.[4]

Enter KING JOHN, ARTHUR, *and* HUBERT.

KING JOHN.

Hubert, keep this boy.—Philip,[5] make up:[6]
My mother is assailed in our tent,
And ta'en, I fear.

BASTARD.

My lord, I rescued her;
Her highness is in safety, fear you not:
But on,[7] my liege; for very little pains
Will bring this labour to an happy end. [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **threats:** threatens. [2] **this day:** this day of the battle; perhaps the Bastard is wearing the lion skin, the badge of his father. [3] **airy devil:** it was believed that evil spirits lived in the air. [4] **breathes:** lives. [5] **Philip:** probably a natural mistake on John's part in calling Richard by his former name. [6] **make up:** advance. [7] **on:** press on.

SCENE III.

The same.

Alarums, excursions, retreat. Enter KING JOHN, ELINOR, ARTHUR, BASTARD, HUBERT, *and* LORDS.

KING JOHN [*to* QUEEN ELINOR].

So shall it be; your Grace shall stay behind,
So strongly guarded.—[*to* ARTHUR] Cousin, look not sad:
Thy grandam loves thee; and thy uncle will
As dear be to thee as thy father was.

ARTHUR.

O, this will make my mother die with grief!

KING JOHN [*to* BASTARD].

Cousin, away for England: haste before:[1]
And ere our coming, see thou shake the bags[2]
Of hoarding abbots; their imprison'd angels[3]
Set thou at liberty: the fat ribs of peace
Must by the hungry now be fed upon:
Use our commission in his[4] utmost force.

BASTARD.

Bell, book, and candle[5] shall not drive me back,
When gold and silver becks[6] me to come on.
I leave your highness.—Grandam, I will pray—
If ever I remember to be holy—
For your fair safety; so, I kiss your hand.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Farewell, gentle cousin.

KING JOHN.

Coz,[7] farewell. [*Exit* BASTARD.

QUEEN ELINOR.

Come hither, little kinsman; hark, a word.

[*Takes* ARTHUR *aside.*

KING JOHN.

Come hither, Hubert. O my gentle Hubert,
We owe thee much! within this wall of flesh

---

[1] **before:** ahead of us. [2] **shake the bags:** empty the moneybags (coffers). [3] **angels:** coins. [4] **his:** its. [5] **Bell, book, and candle:** excommunication, which closes with the words: "Do to the book, quench the candle, ring the bell." [6] **becks:** beckons. [7] **Coz:** cousin, a word used by Shakespeare of almost any degree of blood relationship.

There is a soul counts thee her creditor,
And with advantage[1] means to pay thy love:
And, my good friend, thy voluntary oath
Lives in this bosom, dearly cherished.
Give me thy hand. I had a thing to say,—
But I will fit it with some better time.
By heaven, Hubert, I am almost ashamed
To say what good respect[2] I have of thee.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

I am much bounden to your majesty.

KING JOHN.

Good friend, thou hast no cause to say so yet:
But thou shalt have; and creep time ne'er so slow,
Yet it shall come for me to do thee good.
I had a thing to say,—but let it go:
The sun is in the heaven, and the proud day,
Attended with the pleasures of the world,
Is all too wanton and too full of gauds[3]
To give me audience:[4]—if the midnight bell
Did, with his iron tongue and brazen mouth,
Sound one into the drowsy ear of night;
If this same were a churchyard where we stand,
And thou possessed with a thousand wrongs;
Or if that surly spirit, melancholy,
Had baked thy blood, and made it heavy-thick,
Which else[5] runs tickling up and down the veins,
Making that idiot, laughter, keep men's eyes,[6]
And strain their cheeks to idle merriment,—
A passion hateful to my purposes;
Or if that thou couldst see me without eyes,
Hear me without thine ears, and make reply
Without a tongue, using conceit[7] alone,
Without eyes, ears, and harmful sound of words;

---

[1] advantage: interest. [2] good respects: high regard. [3] gauds: trifling ornaments; toys. [4] To give me audience: to listen to me. [5] else: otherwise. [6] keep men's eyes: inhabit men's eyes. [7] conceit: fancy; imagination.

Then, in despite of brooded [1] watchful day,
I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts:
But, ah, I will not!—yet I love thee well;
And, by my troth,[2] I think thou lovest me well.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

So well, that what you bid me undertake,
Though that my death were adjunct[3] to my act,
By heaven, I would do it.

KING JOHN.

Do not I know thou wouldst?
Good Hubert, Hubert, Hubert, throw[4] thine eye
On yon young boy: I'll tell thee what, my friend,
He is a very serpent in my way;
And wheresoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me:—dost thou understand me?
Thou art his keeper.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

And I'll keep him so,
That he shall not offend your majesty.

KING JOHN.

Death.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

My lord?

KING JOHN.

A grave.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

He shall not live.

KING JOHN.

Enough.
I could be merry now. Hubert, I love thee;
Well, I'll not say what I intend for thee:
Remember.—Madam, fare you well:
I'll send these powers[5] o'er to your majesty.

---

[1] **brooded:** the day is likened to a hen on her nest. [2] **troth:** faith. [3] **adjunct:** consequent; something that follows naturally. [4] **throw:** cast. [5] **powers:** armed forces; troops.

QUEEN ELINOR.

My blessing go with thee!

KING JOHN.

For England, cousin, go:
Hubert shall be your man,[1] attend on you
With all true duty.—On toward Calais, ho! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

The same. The French KING'S *tent.*

Enter KING PHILIP, LOUIS, PANDULPH, *and* ATTENDANTS.

KING PHILIP.

So, by a roaring tempest on the flood,[2]
A whole armado[3] of convented sail
Is scatter'd and disjoin'd from fellowship.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Courage and comfort! all shall yet go well.

KING PHILIP.

What can go well, when we have run[4] so ill? [5]
Are we not beaten? Is not Angiers lost?
Arthur ta'en prisoner? divers dear friends slain?
And bloody England into England gone,
O'erbearing interruption,[6] spite of [7] France?

LOUIS.

What he hath won, that hath he fortified:
So hot a speed with such advice[8] disposed,
Such temperate order in so fierce a course,
Doth want example:[9] who hath read or heard
Of any kindred action like to this?

KING PHILIP.

Well could I bear that England had this praise,

---

[1] **man:** servant; that is, someone who will do your every bidding. [2] **flood:** sea. [3] **armado:** armada; fleet of warships. [4] **run:** proceeded; "They run the ship aground"—*see* Acts 27:41. [5] **so ill:** with such bad fortune. [6] **interruption:** resistance. [7] **spite of:** in spite of. [8] **advice:** determination. [9] **Doth want example:** lack precedent.

So[1] we could find some pattern[2] of our shame.—
Look, who comes here! a grave unto a soul;
Holding th'eternal spirit, against her will,
In the vile prison of afflicted breath.[3]

Enter CONSTANCE.

I prithee, lady, go away with me.

CONSTANCE.

Lo, now! now see the issue[4] of your peace!

KING PHILIP.

Patience, good lady! comfort, gentle Constance!

CONSTANCE.

No, I defy[5] all counsel, all redress,
But that which ends all counsel, true redress,
Death, death:—O amiable lovely death!
Thou odoriferous stench! sound rottenness!
Arise forth from the couch of lasting[6] night,
Thou hate and terror to prosperity,
And I will kiss thy detestable bones;
And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty[7] brows;
And ring these fingers with thy household worms;
And stop this gap of breath[8] with fulsome[9] dust;
And be a carrion monster like thyself:
Come, grin on me; and I will think thou smilest,
And buss[10] thee as thy wife! Misery's love,
O, come to me!

KING PHILIP.

O fair affliction, peace!

CONSTANCE.

No, no, I will not, having breath to cry:
O, that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth!
Then with a passion would I shake the world;
And rouse from sleep that fell anatomy[11]

---

[1] So: so that. [2] pattern: precedent; parallel. [3] vile prison of afflicted breath: i.e., the body. [4] issue: result. [5] defy: renounce. [6] lasting: everlasting. [7] vaulty: arched. [8] gap of breath: mouth. [9] fulsome: offensive to the senses; disgusting. [10] buss: kiss. [11] fell anatomy: cruel skeleton; death's-head.

Which cannot hear a lady's feeble voice,
Which scorns a modern[1] invocation.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Lady, you utter madness, and not sorrow.

CONSTANCE.

Thou art not holy to belie me so;
I am not mad: this hair I tear is mine;
My name is Constance; I was Geffrey's wife;
Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost:
I am not mad;—I would to heaven I were!
For then 'tis like[2] I should forget myself:
O, if I could, what grief should I forget!—
Preach some philosophy to make me mad,
And thou shalt be canonized, cardinal;
For, being not mad, but sensible of grief,[3]
My reasonable part[4] produces reason[5]
How I may be deliver'd of these woes,[6]
And teaches me to kill or hang myself:
If I were mad, I should forget my son,
Or madly think a babe of clouts[7] were he:
I am not mad; too well, too well I feel
The different plague of each calamity.

KING PHILIP.

Bind up those tresses.—O, what love I note
In the fair multitude of those her hairs!
Where but by chance a silver drop hath fall'n,
Even to that drop ten thousand wiry[8] friends
Do glue themselves in sociable[9] grief;
Like true, inseparable, faithful loves,
Sticking together in calamity.

CONSTANCE.

To England, if you will.

---

[1] modern: commonplace; everyday. [2] like: likely. [3] sensible of grief: capable of feeling sorrow. [4] reasonable part: brain. [5] reason: knowledge; an idea. [6] How . . . woes: how I may get rid of these troubles. [7] a babe of clouts: a rag doll. [8] wiry: hair was often compared with wire in Shakespeare's day. [9] sociable: sympathetic.

KING PHILIP.

Bind up your hairs.

CONSTANCE.

Yes, that I will; and wherefore[1] will I do it?
I tore them from their bonds, and cried aloud,
'O, that these hands could so redeem my son,
As they have given these hairs their liberty!'
But now I envy at[2] their liberty,
And will again commit them to their bonds,
Because my poor child is a prisoner.—
And, father cardinal, I have heard you say
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven:
If that be true, I shall see my boy again;
For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
To him that did but yesterday suspire,[3]
There was not such a gracious[4] creature born.
But now will canker-sorrow[5] eat my bud,
And chase the native[6] beauty from his cheek,
And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
As dim[7] and meagre as an ague's fit;
And so he'll die; and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
I shall not know him: therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

You hold [8] too heinous a respect[9] of grief.

CONSTANCE.

He talks to me that never had a son.

KING PHILIP.

You are as fond of [10] grief as of your child.

CONSTANCE.

Grief fills the room[11] up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,

---

[1] wherefore: why. [2] envy at: am envious of. [3] suspire: draw breath. [4] gracious: graceful (full of grace); lovely. [5] canker-sorrow: sorrow, like a cankerworm. [6] native: natural. [7] dim: lacking the fresh glow of health. [8] hold: entertain. [9] too heinous a respect: too hateful a conception. [10] as fond of: as enamored of. [11] room: place.

Remembers[1] me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant[2] garments with his form;
Then have I reason to be fond of grief.
Fare you well: had you such a loss as I,
I could give better comfort than you do.—
I will not keep this form[3] upon my head,
When there is such disorder in my wit.[4]
O Lord! my boy, my Arthur, my fair son!
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world!
My widow-comfort, and my sorrows' cure! [*Exit.*

KING PHILIP.

I fear some outrage, and I'll follow her. [*Exit.*

LOUIS.

There's nothing in this world can make me joy:
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man;
And bitter shame hath spoil'd the sweet world's taste,
That it yields naught but shame and bitterness.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Before the curing of a strong disease,
Even in the instant of repair[5] and health,
The fit[6] is strongest; evils that take leave,
On their departure most of all show evil:
What have you lost by losing of this day?[7]

LOUIS.

All days of glory, joy, and happiness.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

If you had won it, certainly you had.
No, no; when Fortune means to men most good,
She looks upon them with a threatening eye.
'Tis strange to think how much King John hath lost

---

[1] Remembers: reminds. [2] vacant: empty. [3] form: orderly arrangement (of her hair). [4] wit: mind. [5] repair: a return to normalcy; recovery. [6] fit: fever. [7] of this day: today's battle.

In this which he accounts so clearly won:
Are not you grieved that Arthur is his prisoner?

LOUIS.

As heartily as he is glad he hath him.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Your mind is all as youthful as your blood.
Now hear me speak with a prophetic spirit;
For even the breath of what I mean to speak
Shall blow each dust,[1] each straw, each little rub,[2]
Out of the path which shall directly lead
Thy foot to England's throne; and therefore mark.[3]
John hath seized Arthur; and it cannot be,
That, whiles[4] warm life plays in that infant's veins,
The misplaced John should entertain an hour,
One minute, nay, one quiet breath of rest:
A sceptre snatcht with an unruly hand
Must be as boisterously maintain'd [5] as gain'd;
And he that stands upon a slippery place
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up:[6]
That[7] John may stand, then Arthur needs must fall;
So be it, for it cannot be but so.

LOUIS.

But what shall I gain by young Arthur's fall?

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

You, in the right of Lady Blanch your wife,
May then make all the claim that Arthur did.

LOUIS.

And lose it, life and all, as Arthur did.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

How green[8] you are, and fresh in this old world!
John lays you plots;[9] the times conspire with you;

---

[1] each dust: each grain of dust. [2] rub: obstacle. [3] mark: heed my words. [4] whiles: while. [5] boisterously maintain'd: violently held. [6] Make . . . up: does not quibble over any means to retain his gains. [7] That: in order that. [8] green: inexperienced. [9] lays you plots: lays plans for your advantage.

For he that steeps his safety in true blood [1]
Shall find but bloody safety and untrue.
This act, so evilly borne shall cool the hearts
Of all his people, and freeze up their zeal,
That none so small advantage[2] shall step forth
To check his reign, but they will cherish it;
No natural exhalation[3] in the sky
No scape of nature,[4] no distemper'd day,[5]
No common wind, no customed event,
But they will pluck away his[6] natural cause,
And call them meteors, prodigies,[7] and signs,
Abortives, presages, and tongues of heaven,
Plainly denouncing vengeance upon John.

LOUIS.

May be he will not touch young Arthur's life,
But hold himself safe in his prisonment.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

O, sir, when he shall hear of your approach,
If that young Arthur be not gone already,
Even at that news he dies; and then the hearts
Of all his people shall revolt from him,
And kiss the lips of unacquainted change;
And pick strong matter of revolt and wrath
Out of the bloody fingers' ends of John.
Methinks I see this hurly[8] all on foot:
And, O, what better matter breeds for you
Than I have named!—The bastard Faulconbridge
Is now in England, ransacking the church,
Offending charity;[9] if but a dozen French

---

[1] **true blood:** i.e., the blood of the person who has just claim (Arthur). [2] **none so small advantage:** not even the smallest opportunity. [3] **exhalation:** meteor. [4] **scape of nature:** freak or slip of nature. [5] **distemper'd day:** a day disturbed by the elements. [6] **his:** its. [7] **prodigies:** freaks; monsters. [8] **hurly:** hurly-burly; commotion. [9] **charity:** good will among the Christians.

Were there in arms, they would be as a call [1]
To train[2] ten thousand English to their side;
Or as a little snow, tumbled about,
Anon[3] becomes a mountain. O noble Dauphin,
Go with me to the king:—'tis wonderful
What may be wrought out of their discontent,
Now that their souls are topful of offence:[4]
For England go:—I will whet on[5] the king.

LOUIS.

Strong reasons[6] make strong actions: let us go:
If you say ay, the king will not say no. [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **a call:** a cry to entice birds; a decoy.
[2] **train:** lure.
[3] **Anon:** straightway.
[4] **topful of offence:** filled to the brim with King John's wrongs.
[5] **whet on:** instigate; goad.
[6] **reasons:** causes.

King John

ACT 4

ACT IV

In a tense and climactic scene between King John's agent and the young prince, Hubert discloses that he has sworn to put out Arthur's eyes. The boy pleads so eloquently that Hubert cannot bring himself to do it. For the boy's protection, however, he informs John that he has carried out his orders. John, being crowned for the second time despite the disapproval of his nobles, announces that Arthur has died a natural death. His lords depart in indignation and John, dismayed by their reaction, hears news which disturbs him further: France has invaded England; his mother has died; a diviner called Peter of Pomfret has declared that John is about to lose his crown; and there are strange portents and murmurs against Arthur's death. John upbraids Hubert for killing Arthur, and is relieved when he hears that Hubert was unable to carry out his order. He has already urged the Bastard to hurry after the dissident nobles, and he now tells Hubert to report the truth to them. But in the meantime, Arthur, trying to escape, jumps from the castle walls and is killed. John's counselors—Pembroke, Salisbury and Bigot—will not listen to the Bastard and when they find Arthur's body, they are convinced that Hubert has killed the boy on instruction from King John. As soon as they see Hubert, they wish to kill him, but the Bastard, distressed as he is by the boy's death, reserves judgment and restrains them.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A room in a castle.

Enter HUBERT *and* EXECUTIONERS.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Heat me these irons hot; and look thou stand
Within the arras:[1] when I strike my foot
Upon the bosom[2] of the ground, rush forth,
And bind the boy which you shall find with me
Fast to the chair: be heedful: hence, and watch.

FIRST EXECUTIONER.

I hope your warrant will bear out[3] the deed.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Uncleanly[4] scruples! fear not you:[5] look to't.

[*Exeunt* EXECUTIONERS.

Young lad, come forth; I have to say with you.[6]

Enter ARTHUR.

ARTHUR.

Good morrow, Hubert.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Good morrow, little prince.

ARTHUR.

As little prince, having so great a title
To be more prince, as may be.—You are sad.

---

[1] **Within the arras:** behind the curtains; wall hangings (tapestries) derived their name from Arras, France, where they were made. [2] **bosom:** surface. [3] **bear out:** support. [4] **Uncleanly:** improper. [5] **fear not you:** do not be afraid (of the outcome). [6] **I have to say with you:** I have something to say to you.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Indeed, I have been merrier.

ARTHUR.

Mercy on me!
Methinks nobody should be sad but I:
Yet, I remember, when I was in France,
Young gentlemen would be as sad as night,
Only for wantonness.[1] By my christendom,[2]
So[3] I were out of prison, and kept sheep,
I should be as merry as the day is long;
And so I would be here, but that I doubt[4]
My uncle practises[5] more harm to me:
He is afraid of me, and I of him:
Is it my fault that I was Geffrey's son?
No, indeed, is't not; and I would to heaven
I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert

HUBERT DE BURGH [*aside*].

If I talk to him, with his innocent prate[6]
He will awake my mercy, which lies dead:
Therefore I will be sudden and dispatch.[7]

ARTHUR.

Are you sick, Hubert? you look pale to-day:
In sooth,[8] I would you were a little sick,
That I might sit all night and watch with you.
I warrant I love you more than you do me.

HUBERT DE BURGH [*aside*].

His words do take possession of my bosom.—
Read here, young Arthur. [*Showing a paper.*
[*Aside*] How now, foolish rheum![9]
Turning dispiteous[10] torture out of door!
I must be brief, lest resolution drop
Out at mine eyes in tender womanish tears.—
Can you not read it, is it not fair writ?[11]

---

[1] wantonness: a whim; perverseness. [2] By my christendom: as I am a Christian (a mild oath). [3] So: if; provided that. [4] doubt: fear. [5] practises: plots. [6] prate: prattle. [7] dispatch: finish the job at once. [8] In sooth: in truth; indeed. [9] rheum: tears. [10] dispiteous: pitiless. [11] fair writ: clearly or legibly written.

ARTHUR.

Too fairly, Hubert, for so foul effect:[1]
Must you with hot irons burn out both mine eyes?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Young boy, I must.

ARTHUR.

And will you?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

And I will.

ARTHUR.

Have you the heart? When your head did but ache,
I knit my handkercher about your brows,—
The best I had, a princess wrought it me,—[2]
And I did never ask it you again;[3]
And with my hand at midnight held your head;
And like the watchful minutes to the hour,[4]
Still and anon[5] cheer'd up the heavy time,[6]
Saying, 'What lack you?' and, 'Where lies your grief?' [7]
Or, 'What good love[8] may I perform for you?'
Many a poor man's son would have lien[9] still,
And ne'er have spoke a loving word to you;
But you at your sick service had a prince.
Nay, you may think my love was crafty[10] love,
And call it cunning:—do, an if you will.[11]
If heaven be pleased that you must use me ill,
Why, then you must.—Will you put out mine eyes?
These eyes that never did nor never shall
So much as frown on you?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

I have sworn to do it;
And with hot irons must I burn them out.

---

[1] **effect:** meaning; purpose. [2] **wrought it me:** embroidered it for me. [3] **ask it you again:** ask you for it again. [4] **watchful minutes to the hour:** that is, the minutes that always watch their progress to the hour. [5] **Still and anon:** always. [6] **heavy time:** dreary hours. [7] **grief:** pain. [8] **love:** act of love. [9] **lien:** lain. [10] **crafty:** feigned; deceitful. [11] **do, an if you will:** do so, if you wish.

ARTHUR.

Ah, none but in this iron[1] age would do it!
The iron of itself, though heat[2] red-hot,
Approaching near these eyes, would drink my tears,
And quench his fiery indignation
Even in the water of mine innocence;
Nay, after that, consume away in rust,
But for containing[3] fire to harm mine eye.
Are you more stubborn-hard than hammer'd iron?
An if an angel should have come to me,
And told me Hubert should put out mine eyes,
I would not have believed him,—no tongue but Hubert's.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Come forth! [*Stamps.*

Enter EXECUTIONERS, *with cord, irons, &c.*

Do as I bid you do.

ARTHUR.

O, save me, Hubert, save me! my eyes are out
Even with the fierce looks of these bloody men.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Give me the iron, I say, and bind him here.

ARTHUR.

Alas, what need you be so boisterous-rough?[4]
I will not struggle, I will stand stone-still.
For heaven sake, Hubert, let me not be bound!
Nay, hear me, Hubert!—drive these men away,
And I will sit as quiet as a lamb;
I will not stir, nor wince, nor speak a word,
Nor look upon the iron angerly:[5]
Thrust but these men away, and I'll forgive you,

---

[1] **iron**: hard; cruel (with a pun on "irons").
[2] **heat**: heated.
[3] **But for containing**: merely because it contained.
[4] **boisterous-rough**: rudely violent.
[5] **angerly**: angrily.

Whatever torment you do put me to.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Go, stand within; let[1] me alone with him.

FIRST EXECUTIONER.

I am best pleased to be from[2] such a deed.

[*Exeunt* EXECUTIONERS.

ARTHUR.

Alas, I then have chid[3] away my friend!
He hath a stern look, but a gentle heart:—
Let him come back, that his compassion may
Give life to yours.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Come, boy, prepare yourself.

ARTHUR.

Is there no remedy?[4]

HUBERT DE BURGH.

None, but to lose your eyes.

ARTHUR.

O heaven!—that there were but a mote in yours,
A grain, a dust, a gnat, a wandering hair,
Any annoyance in that precious sense![5]
Then, feeling what small things are boisterous[6] there,
Your vile intent must needs seem horrible.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Is this your promise? go to,[7] hold your tongue.

ARTHUR.

Hubert, the utterance of a brace[8] of tongues
Must needs want pleading for a pair of eyes:
Let me not hold my tongue,—let me not, Hubert;
Or, Hubert, if you will, cut out my tongue,
So[9] I may keep my eyes: O, spare mine eyes,
Though to no use but still to look on you!—

---

[1] let: leave. [2] from: away from. [3] chid: scolded. [4] remedy: alternative. [5] that precious sense: Hubert's sense of sight; hence, his eyes. [6] boisterous: painful. [7] go to: hush; be quiet. [8] brace: pair. [9] So: if in that way.

Lo, by my troth, the instrument is cold,
And would not harm me.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

I can heat it, boy.

ARTHUR.

No, in good sooth; the fire is dead with grief,
Being create[1] for comfort, to be used
In undeserved extremes:[2] see else yourself;
There is no malice in this burning coal;
The breath of heaven hath blown his spirit out,
And strew'd repentant ashes on his head.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

But with my breath I can revive it, boy.

ARTHUR.

And if you do, you will but make it blush,
And glow with shame of your proceedings, Hubert:
Nay, it perchance will sparkle in[3] your eyes;
And, like a dog that is compell'd to fight,
Snatch at his master that doth tarre him on.[4]
All things that you should use to do me wrong
Deny their office:[5] only you do lack
That mercy which fierce fire and iron extends,[6]
Creatures of note[7] for mercy-lacking uses.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Well, see to live; I will not touch thine eye
For all the treasure that thine uncle owes:[8]
Yet am I sworn, and I did purpose, boy,
With this same very iron to burn them out.

ARTHUR.

O, now you look like Hubert! all this while
You were disguised.

---

[1] **create:** created. [2] **extremes:** acts of cruelty. [3] **sparkle in:** throw sparks into. [4] **tarre him on:** provoke or incite him. [5] **Deny their office:** refuse to perform their proper functions. [6] **extends:** shows. [7] **of note:** noted. [8] **owes:** owns.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Peace; no more. Adieu.
Your uncle must not know but you are dead;[1]
I'll fill these dogged [2] spies with false reports:
And, pretty child, sleep doubtless[3] and secure
That Hubert, for the wealth of all the world,
Will not offend thee.

ARTHUR.

O heaven! I thank you, Hubert.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Silence; no more: go closely[4] in with me:
Much danger do I undergo for thee. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

KING JOHN'S *palace.*

Enter KING JOHN, PEMBROKE, SALISBURY, *and other* LORDS.

KING JOHN.

Here once again we sit, once again crown'd,[5]
And lookt upon, I hope, with cheerful eyes.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

This once again, but that your highness pleased,
Was once superfluous: you were crown'd before,
And that high royalty was ne'er pluckt off;[6]
The faiths of men ne'er stained with revolt;
Fresh expectation[7] troubled not the land
With any long'd-for change or better state.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Therefore, to be possest with double pomp,[8]
To guard [9] a title that was rich before,
To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
To throw a perfume on the violet,

---

[1] **but you are dead:** that you are not dead. [2] **dogged:** malicious; sullen. [3] **doubtless:** without fear. [4] **closely:** secretly. [5] **once again crowned:** King John has just been crowned for the second time. [6] **pluckt off:** taken from you. [7] **Fresh expectation:** hope of a new order of things. [8] **double pomp:** a second coronation. [9] **guard:** trim.

To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light[1]
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven[2] to garnish,[3]
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

But that your royal pleasure must be done,
This act is as an ancient tale new-told;
And in the last repeating troublesome,
Being urged at a time unseasonable.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

In this, the antique and well-noted [4] face
Of plain old form[5] is much disfigured;
And, like a shifted wind [6] unto a sail,
It makes the course of thoughts to fetch about;[7]
Startles and frights consideration;[8]
Makes sound opinion sick, and truth suspected,
For putting on so new a fashion'd robe.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

When workmen strive to do better than well,
They do confound [9] their skill in covetousness;
And oftentimes excusing of [10] a fault[11]
Doth make the fault the worse by the excuse,—
As patches set upon a little breach[12]
Discredit more in hiding of the fault
Than did the fault before it was so patcht.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

To this effect, before you were new-crown'd,
We breathed [13] our counsel: but it pleased your highness[14]
To overbear it; and we are all well pleased,
Since all and every part of what we would [15]
Doth make a stand at[16] what your highness will.

---

[1] taper-light: candlelight. [2] eye of heaven: the sun. [3] garnish: adorn. [4] antique and well-noted: old and well-known. [5] old form: custom. [6] a shifted wind: a change in the wind. [7] fetch about: alter course (a nautical term). [8] consideration: contemplation. [9] confound: destroy; waste. [10] excusing of: apologizing for. [11] a fault: an imperfection. [12] breach: tear (in a garment). [13] breathed: spoke. [14] overbear: override. [15] would: would do. [16] Doth . . . at: conforms with.

KING JOHN.

Some reasons of [1] this double coronation
I have possest you with, and think them strong;
And more, more strong, then lesser is my fear,
I shall indue[2] you with: meantime but ask
What you would have reform'd that is not well,
And well shall you perceive how willingly
I will both hear and grant you your requests.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Then I—as one that am the tongue of these,
To sound [3] the purposes of all their hearts,
Both for myself and them, but, chief of all,
Your safety, for the which myself and them
Bend [4] their best studies[5]—heartily request
Th'enfranchisement[6] of Arthur; whose restraint
Doth move the murmuring lips of discontent
To break into this dangerous argument,—
If what in rest[7] you have in right you hold,
Why, then your fears—which, as they say, attend
The steps of wrong—should move you to mew up[8]
Your tender kinsman, and to choke his days
With barbarous ignorance, and deny his youth
The rich advantage of good exercise.[9]
That the time's enemies[10] may not have this
To grace occasions,[11] let it be our suit,
That you have bid us ask, his liberty;
Which for our goods[12] we do no further ask
Than whereupon our weal,[13] on you depending,
Counts it your weal [14] he have his liberty.

KING JOHN.

Let it be so: I do commit his youth
To your direction.

Enter HUBERT.

Hubert, what news with you?

---

[1] of: for. [2] indue: endow. [3] sound: declare. [4] Bend: direct. [5] best studies: greatest efforts. [6] enfranchisement: release from prison. [7] in rest: in quiet possession. [8] mew up: shut up (as in a coup). [9] good exercise: i.e., the education befitting a future king. [10] the times' enemies: the enemies of the present state of affairs. [11] grace occasions: lend credit to opportunities for rebellion. [12] for our goods: for our own good. [13] weal: commonwealth. [14] weal: welfare.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

This is the man should do the bloody deed;
He show'd his warrant to a friend of mine:
The image of a wicked heinous fault
Lives in his eye; that close aspect[1] of his
Does show the mood of a much-troubled breast:
And I do fearfully believe 'tis done,
What we so fear'd he had a charge[2] to do.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

The colour of the king doth come and go
Between his purpose and his conscience.[3]
Like heralds 'twixt two dreadful battles set:[4]
His passion is so ripe, it needs must break.[5]

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

And when it breaks, I fear will issue thence
The foul corruption of a sweet child's death.

KING JOHN.

We cannot hold mortality's[6] strong hand:—
Good lords, although my will to give is living.
The suit which you demand is gone and dead.
He tells us Arthur is deceased to-night.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Indeed, we fear'd his sickness was past cure.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Indeed, we heard how near his death he was
Before the child himself felt he was sick:
This must be answer'd either here or hence.[7]

KING JOHN.

Why do you bend such solemn brows on me?
Think you I bear the shears of destiny?[8]
Have I commandment on the pulse of life?

EARL OF SALISBURY.

It is apparent foul-play; and 'tis shame

---

[1] close aspect: secretive or guarded look. [2] a charge: an order. [3] Between . . . conscience: between the consciousness of his own guilt and his hope of concealing it. [4] battles set: troops drawn up for battle. [5] break: that is, as a boil breaks open when ripe. [6] mortality's: death's. [7] answer'd . . . hence: atoned for here or in the next world. [8] the shears of destiny: an allusion to the Fates, or Parcae, one of which (Atropos) "cuts the thread of life."

That greatness[1] should so grossly offer it: [2]
So thrive it in your game! [3] and so, farewell.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Stay yet, Lord Salisbury; I'll go with thee,
And find th'inheritance of this poor child,
His little kingdom of a forced[4] grave.
That blood[5] which owed[6] the breadth of all this isle,
Three foot of it doth hold:—bad world the while! [7]
This must not be thus borne:[8] this will break out
To all our sorrows, and ere long I doubt.[9]

[*Exeunt* LORDS.

KING JOHN.

They burn in indignation. I repent:
There is no sure foundation set on blood,
No certain life achieved by others' death.—

Enter a MESSENGER.

A fearful[10] eye thou hast: where is that blood
That I have seen inhabit in those cheeks?
So foul a sky clears not without a storm:
Pour down thy weather:[11] how goes all in France?

MESSENGER.

From France to England. Never such a power
For any foreign preparation
Was levied in the body of a land.
The copy of your speed is learn'd by them;
For when you should be told they do prepare,
The tidings comes that they are all arrived.

KING JOHN.

O, where hath our intelligence been drunk?
Where hath it slept? Where is my mother's ear,
That such an army could be drawn in France,
And she not hear of it?

---

[1] greatness: the king. [2] grossly offer it: "clumsily attempt it"—Wright. [3] So thrive it in your game: may the rest of your schemes succeed as poorly as this one. [4] forced: brought about by violence. [5] blood: life. [6] owed: owned. [7] bad world the while: it's a bad world when such things can happen. [8] thus borne: taken so lightly. [9] doubt: fear. [10] fearful: full of fear. [11] weather: storm (bad news).

MESSENGER.

My liege, her ear
Is stopt with dust; the first of April died
Your noble mother; and, as I hear, my lord,
The Lady Constance in a frenzy[1] died
Three days before;[2] but this from rumour's tongue
I idly[3] heard; if true or false I know not.

KING JOHN.

Withhold thy speed, dreadful occasion![4]
O, make a league with me, till I have pleased
My discontented peers! What! mother dead!
How wildly, then, walks my estate in France!—
Under whose conduct[5] came those powers of France
That thou for truth givest out are landed here?

MESSENGER.

Under the Dauphin.

KING JOHN.

Thou hast made me giddy
With these ill tidings.

Enter BASTARD *and* PETER *of Pomfret.*

Now, what says the world
To your proceedings? do not seek to stuff
My head with more ill news, for it is full.

BASTARD.

But if you be afeard to hear the worst,
Then let the worst, unheard, fall on your head.

KING JOHN.

Bear with me, cousin; for I was amazed[6]
Under the tide: but now I breathe again
Aloft[7] the flood; and can give audience
To any tongue, speak it of what it will.

---

[1] frenzy: maniacal fit. [2] Three days before: historically, Elinor died July, 1204; Constance, August 31, 1201. [3] idly: casually. [4] occasion: course of events. [5] conduct: leadership. [6] amazed: struck dumb. [7] Aloft: on top of; above.

BASTARD.

How I have sped[1] among the clergy-men,
The sums I have collected shall express.
But as I travell'd hither through the land,
I find the people strangely fantasied;[2]
Possest with rumours, full of idle dreams,
Not knowing what they fear, but full of fear:
And here's a prophet, that I brought with me
From forth[3] the streets of Pomfret,[4] whom I found
With many hundreds treading on his heels;
To whom he sung, in rude[5] harsh-sounding rimes,
That, ere the next Ascension-day at noon,
Your highness should deliver up your crown.

KING JOHN.

Thou idle[6] dreamer, wherefore[7] didst thou so?

PETER.

Foreknowing that the truth will fall out[8] so.

KING JOHN.

Hubert, away with him; imprison him;
And on that day at noon, whereon he says
I shall yield up my crown, let him be hang'd.
Deliver him to safety;[9] and return,
For I must use thee. [*Exit* HUBERT *with* PETER.
O my gentle[10] cousin,
Hear'st thou the news abroad, who are arrived?

BASTARD.

The French, my lord: men's mouths are full of it:
Besides, I met Lord Bigot and Lord Salisbury
With eyes as red as new-enkindled fire,
And others more, going to seek the grave
Of Arthur, who, they say, is[11] kill'd to-night
On your suggestion.[12]

---

[1] **sped:** fared. [2] **strangely fantasied:** filled with strange ideas. [3] **forth:** out. [4] **Pomfret:** Pontefract, in Yorkshire. [5] **rude:** crude. [6] **idle:** foolish. [7] **wherefore:** why. [8] **fall out:** turn out. [9] **Deliver . . . safety:** deliver him into safe custody. [10] **gentle:** nobly born. [11] **is:** was. [12] **suggestion:** secret incitement.

KING JOHN.

Gentle kinsman, go;
And thrust thyself into their companies:
I have a way to win their loves again;
Bring them before me.

BASTARD.

I will seek them out.

KING JOHN.

Nay, but make haste; the better foot before.[1]
O, let me have no subject enemies,[2]
When adverse[3] foreigners affright my towns
With dreadful pomp[4] of stout[5] invasion!
Be Mercury,[6] set feathers to thy heels,
And fly like thought from them to me again.

BASTARD.

The spirit of the time shall teach me speed.

KING JOHN.

Spoke like a sprightful [7] noble gentleman.

[*Exit* BASTARD.

Go after him; for he perhaps shall need
Some messenger betwixt me and the peers;
And be thou he.

MESSENGER.

With all my heart, my liege. [*Exit.*

KING JOHN.

My mother dead!

Enter HUBERT.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

My lord, they say five moons[8] were seen to-night;
Four fixed; and the fifth did whirl about
The other four in wondrous motion.

KING JOHN.

Five moons!

---

[1] **the better foot before:** go as fast as possible. [2] **subject enemies:** subjects as enemies. [3] **adverse:** hostile. [4] **pomp:** show. [5] **stout:** bold. [6] **Mercury:** the wing-heeled messenger of the gods. [7] **sprightful:** high-spirited. [8] **five moons:** the five moons were mentioned by other writers before Shakespeare, among them, Roger of Wendover, Grafton, and Holinshed.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Old men and beldams[1] in the streets
Do prophesy upon it dangerously:[2]
Young Arthur's death is common in their mouths:[3]
And when they talk of him, they shake their heads,
And whisper one another in the ear;
And he that speaks doth gripe[4] the hearer's wrist;
Whilst he that hears makes fearful action,[5]
With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes.
I saw a smith stand with his hammer, thus,
The whilst his iron did on the anvil cool,
With open mouth swallowing a tailor's news;
Who, with his shears and measure in his hand,
Standing on slippers, which his nimble haste
Had falsely thrust upon contrary[6] feet,
Told of a many thousand warlike French
That were embattailed [7] and rankt in Kent:
Another lean unwasht artificer[8]
Cuts off his tale, and talks of Arthur's death.

KING JOHN.

Why seek'st thou to possess me with these fears?
Why urgest[9] thou so oft young Arthur's death?
Thy hand hath murder'd him: I had a mighty cause
To wish him dead, but thou hadst none to kill him.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

No had,[10] my lord! why, did you not provoke[11] me?

KING JOHN.

It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves that take their humours[12] for a warrant

---

[1] **beldams:** old women; hags. [2] **prophesy . . . dangerously:** predict dire events to come from it. [3] **common in their mouths:** widely talked about. [4] **gripe:** grasp. [5] **action:** gesticulations. [6] **contrary:** opposite. [7] **embattailed:** arrayed for battle. [8] **artificer:** workman. [9] **urgest:** speak. [10] **No had:** had I not. [11] **provoke:** egg me on. [12] **humours:** slightest whims.

To break within the bloody house of life;
And, on the winking of authority,
To understand a law;[1] to know the meaning
Of dangerous majesty,[2] when perchance it frowns
More upon humour[3] than advised respect.[4]

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Here is your hand and seal for what I did.

KING JOHN.

O, when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth[5]
Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal
Witness against us to damnation!
How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
Make deeds ill done! Hadst not thou been by,[6]
A fellow by the hand of nature markt,
Quoted,[7] and sign'd, to do a deed of shame,
This murder had not come into my mind:
But, taking note of thy abhorr'd aspect,
Finding thee fit for bloody villainy,
Apt, liable to be employ'd in danger,
I faintly broke with thee of Arthur's death;
And thou, to be endeared to a king,
Made it no conscience to destroy a prince.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

My lord,—

KING JOHN.

Hadst thou but shook thy head, or made a pause,
When I spake darkly what I purposed,
Or turn'd an eye of doubt upon my face,
As bid me tell my tale in express words,
Deep shame had struck me dumb, made me break off,
And those thy fears might have wrought fears in me:

---

[1] on the winking . . . law: when one in authority so much as winks, to interpret it as a command. [2] dangerous majesty: that is, when the king is difficult to deal with. [3] More upon humour: more because of ill-temper. [4] advised respect: calm consideration. [5] the last account . . . earth: i.e., Judgment Day. [6] by: nearby; on hand. [7] Quoted: noted; marked down (as on the margin of a book).

But thou didst understand me by my signs,
And didst in signs again parley with sin;
Yea, without stop, didst let thy heart consent,
And consequently thy rude hand to act
The deed, which both our tongues held vile to name.—
Out of my sight, and never see me more!
My nobles leave me; and my state is braved,[1]
Even at my gates, with ranks of foreign powers:
Nay, in the body of this fleshly land,
This kingdom,[2] this confine of blood and breath,
Hostility and civil tumult reigns
Between my conscience and my cousin's death.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Arm you against your other enemies,
I'll make a peace between your soul and you.
Young Arthur is alive: this hand of mine
Is yet a maiden[3] and an innocent hand,
Not painted with the crimson spots of blood.
Within this bosom never enter'd yet
The dreadful motion[4] of a murderous thought;
And you have slander'd nature in my form,
Which, howsoever rude exteriorly,[5]
Is yet the cover of a fairer mind
Than to be butcher of an innocent child.[6]

KING JOHN.

Doth Arthur live? O, haste thee to the peers,
Throw this report on their incensed rage,
And make them tame to their obedience! [7]
Forgive the comment that my passion made
Upon thy feature; for my rage was blind,
And foul imaginary eyes of blood [8]
Presented thee more hideous than thou art.

---

[1] **braved:** challenged. [2] **the body . . . kingdom:** one of Shakespeare's allusions to the body of man as a microcosm. [3] **a maiden:** bloodless. [4] **motion:** impulse. [5] **rude exteriorly:** ugly on the outside. [6] **of a fairer . . . child:** of a mind too fair to be the killer of an innocent child. [7] **tame to their obedience:** subject to their oaths of allegiance. [8] **imaginary eyes of blood:** eyes imagining bloodshed.

O, answer not; but to my closet[1] bring
The angry lords with all expedient haste!
I conjure[2] thee but slowly; run more fast. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.

Before a castle.

Enter ARTHUR *on the walls.*

ARTHUR.

The wall is high, and yet will I leap down:
Good ground, be pitiful,[3] and hurt me not!
There's few or none do know me: if they did,
This ship-boy's semblance[4] hath disguised me quite
I am afraid; and yet I'll venture it.
If I get down, and do not break my limbs,
I'll find a thousand shifts[5] to get away:
As good to die and go, as die and stay. [*Leaps down.*
O me! my uncle's spirit is in these stones:
Heaven take my soul, and England keep my bones! [*Dies.*

Enter PEMBROKE, SALISBURY, *and* BIGOT.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Lords, I will meet him[6] at Saint Edmund's-Bury:
It is our safety,[7] and we must embrace[8]
This gentle offer of the perilous time.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Who brought that letter from the cardinal?

EARL OF SALISBURY.

The Count Melun, a noble lord of France;
Whose private with[9] me of the Dauphin's love
Is much more general[10] than these lines import.

---

[1] closet: private chamber or apartment. [2] conjure: solemnly adjure. [3] pitiful: full of pity. [4] ship-boy's semblance: Arthur is disguised as a cabin boy. [5] shifts: tricks. [6] him: the Dauphin. [7] safety: only hope of safety. [8] embrace: welcome. [9] private with: private communication to. [10] general: affable.

ROBERT BIGOT.

To-morrow morning let us meet him, then.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Or rather then set forward; for 'twill be
Two long days' journey, lords, or e'er[1] we meet.

Enter BASTARD.

BASTARD.

Once more to-day well met, distemper'd[2] lords!
The king by me requests your presence straight.[3]

EARL OF SALISBURY.

The king hath dispossest himself of us:
We will not line his thin[4] bestained cloak
With our pure honours, nor attend the foot
That leaves the print of blood where'er it walks.
Return and tell him so: we know the worst.

BASTARD.

Whate'er you think, good words, I think, were best.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Our griefs,[5] and not our manners, reason[6] now.

BASTARD.

But there is little reason in your grief;
Therefore 'twere[7] reason you had manners now.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Sir, sir, impatience hath his privilege.

BASTARD.

'Tis true,—to hurt his master, no man else.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

This is the prison:—what is he lies here? [*Seeing* ARTHUR.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

O death, made proud with pure and princely beauty!
The earth had not a hole to hide this deed.

---

[1] **or e'er:** before. [2] **distemper'd:** ill-humored; out of sort. [3] **straight:** immediately. [4] **thin:** possibly a mistake for *sin*. [5] **griefs:** grievances. [6] **reason:** guide our conduct. [7] **'twere:** it would be.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Murder, as hating what himself hath done,
Doth lay it open to urge on revenge.

ROBERT BIGOT.

Or, when he doom'd this beauty to a grave,
Found it too precious-princely for a grave.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Sir Richard, what think you? Have you beheld,
Or have you read or heard? or could you think?
Or do you almost think, although you see,
That[1] you do see? could thought, without this object,
Form such another? This is the very top,
The height, the crest, or crest unto the crest,
Of murder's arms:[2] this is the bloodiest shame,
The wildest savagery, the vilest stroke,
That ever wall-eyed [3] wrath or staring rage[4]
Presented to the tears of soft remorse.[5]

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

All murders past do stand excused in this:
And this, so sole and so unmatchable,
Shall give a holiness, a purity,
To the yet-unbegotten sin of times;[6]
And prove a deadly bloodshed [7] but a jest,
Exampled by[8] this heinous spectacle.

BASTARD.

It is a damned and a bloody work;
The graceless action[9] of a heavy[10] hand,—
If that it be[11] the work of any hand.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

If that it be the work of any hand!—
We had a kind of light[12] what would ensue:
It is the shameful work of Hubert's hand;

---

[1] That: that which. [2] arms: heraldic device. [3] wall-eyed: glaring. [4] rage: madness. [5] remorse: pity. [6] times: future times. [7] bloodshed: act of bloodshed. [8] Exampled by: compared to. [9] graceless: unholy. [10] heavy: wicked. [11] that it be: it is. [12] a kind of light: an inkling of.

The practice[1] and the purpose of the king:—
From whose obedience I forbid my soul,
Kneeling before this ruin of sweet life,
And breathing to his breathless excellence
The incense of a vow, a holy vow,
Never to taste the pleasures of the world,
Never to be infected[2] with delight,
Nor conversant with ease and idleness,
Till I have set a glory to this hand,[3]
By giving it the worship of revenge.

EARL OF PEMBROKE *and* ROBERT BIGOT.

Our souls religiously confirm thy words.

Enter HUBERT.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Lords, I am hot with haste in seeking you:
Arthur doth live; the king hath sent for you.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

O, he is bold, and blushes not at death:—
Avaunt,[4] thou hateful villain, get thee gone!

HUBERT DE BURGH.

I am no villain.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Must I rob the law?[5] [*Drawing his sword.*

BASTARD.

Your sword is bright,[6] sir; put it up again.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Not till I sheathe it in a murderer's skin.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Stand back, Lord Salisbury,—stand back, I say;
By heaven, I think my sword's as sharp as yours:
I would not have you, lord, forget yourself,
Nor tempt the danger of my true[7] defence;

---

[1] **practice**: stratagem; plot. [2] **infected**: affected. [3] **this hand**: Salisbury lifts his hand as he makes the vow for revenge. [4] **Avaunt**: begone. [5] **rob the law**: that is, take Hubert's punishment (death) into his own hands. [6] **bright**: untarnished. [7] **true**: honest; just.

Lest I, by marking of your rage,[1] forget
Your worth, your greatness, and nobility.

ROBERT BIGOT.

Out, dunghill! darest thou brave[2] a nobleman?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Not for my life: but yet I dare defend
My innocent life against an emperor.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Thou art a murderer.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Do not prove me so;[3]
Yet I am none: whose tongue soe'er speaks false,
Not truly speaks; who speaks not truly, lies.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Cut him to pieces.

BASTARD.

Keep the peace, I say.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Stand by,[4] or I shall gall[5] you, Faulconbridge.

BASTARD.

Thou wert better gall the devil, Salisbury:
If thou but frown on me, or stir thy foot,
Or teach thy hasty spleen[6] to do me shame,
I'll strike thee dead. Put up thy sword betime;[7]
Or I'll so maul you and your toasting-iron,[8]
That you shall think the devil is come from hell.

ROBERT BIGOT.

What wilt thou do, renowned Faulconbridge?
Second[9] a villain and a murderer?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Lord Bigot, I am none.[10]

ROBERT BIGOT.

Who kill'd this prince?

---

[1] marking of your rage: heeding your madness. [2] brave: challenge. [3] Do not prove me so: do not make me a murderer by forcing me to kill you. [4] Stand by: stand aside. [5] gall: hurt; wound. [6] spleen: temper. [7] betime: before it is too late. [8] toasting-iron: derisive name for Salisbury's sword. [9] Second: side with. [10] none: not a murderer.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

'Tis not an hour since I left him well:
I honour'd him, I loved him; and will weep
My date of life[1] out for his sweet life's loss.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Trust not those cunning waters of his eyes,
For villainy is not without such rheum;[2]
And he, long traded [3] in it, makes it seem
Like rivers of remorse and innocency.
Away with me, all you[4] whose souls abhor
Th'uncleanly savours of a slaughter-house;
For I am stifled with this smell of sin.

ROBERT BIGOT.

Away toward Bury,[5] to the Dauphin there!

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

There, tell the king, he may inquire us out. [*Exeunt* LORDS.

BASTARD.

Here's a good world! [6]—Knew you of this fair work?
Beyond the infinite and boundless reach
Of mercy, if thou didst this deed of death,
Art thou damn'd, Hubert.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Do but hear me, sir:—

BASTARD.

Ha! I'll tell thee what;
Thou'rt damn'd as black—nay, nothing is so black;
Thou art more deep damn'd than Prince Lucifer:
There is not yet so ugly a fiend of hell
As thou shalt be, if thou didst kill this child.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Upon my soul,—

---

[1] **My date of life:** my allotted span of life.
[2] **rheum:** tears.
[3] **traded:** practiced.
[4] **savours:** smells.
[5] **Bury:** Saint Edmund's-Bury.
[6] **a good world:** a fine state of afairs.

BASTARD.

If thou didst but consent
To this most cruel act, do but despair;
And if thou want'st a cord, the smallest thread
That ever spider twisted from her womb
Will serve to strangle thee; a rush will be a beam[1]
To hang thee on; or wouldst thou drown thyself,
Put but a little water in a spoon,
And it shall be as all the ocean,
Enough to stifle such a villain up.
I do suspect thee very grievously.[2]

HUBERT DE BURGH.

If I in act, consent, or sin of thought,
Be guilty of the stealing that sweet breath
Which was embounded in this beauteous clay,
Let hell want[3] pains enough to torture me!
I left him well.

BASTARD.

Go, bear him in thine arms.—
I am amazed,[4] methinks; and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of this world.—
How easy dost thou take all England[5] up!
From forth this morsel of dead royalty,
The life, the right, and truth of all this realm
Is fled to heaven; and England now is left
To tug and scamble,[6] and to part by th' teeth
The unowed interest[7] of proud-swelling state.
Now for the bare-pickt bone of majesty
Doth dogged[8] war bristle his angry crest,
And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace:
Now powers from home[9] and discontents[10] at home
Meet in one line; and vast confusion waits,

---

[1] **beam:** stout log. [2] **grievously:** strongly. [3] **want:** lack. [4] **amazed:** bewildered. [5] **all England:** Arthur (the hope of England as the rightful heir to the throne). [6] **scamble:** scramble. [7] **The unowed interest:** the interest to which no one has a proper claim. [8] **dogged:** cruel. [9] **powers from home:** foreign invaders. [10] **discontents:** malcontents.

As doth a raven on a sick-fall'n beast,
The imminent decay of wrested pomp.[1]
Now happy he whose cloak and cincture[2] can
Hold out[3] this tempest.—Bear away that child,
And follow me with speed: I'll to the king:
A thousand businesses are brief in hand,[4]
And heaven itself doth frown upon the land. [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **wrested pomp:** "greatness obtained by violence"—Malone.
[2] **cincture:** girdle.
[3] **Hold out:** withstand.
[4] **are brief in hand:** must be dispatched at once.

King John

ACT 5

ACT V

PANDULPH ARRIVES in England, John having made his peace with the Pope. He promises to persuade the French to lay down their arms, but no sooner has he left the court than the Bastard brings news that London has received the Dauphin and that John's nobles, having found Arthur dead, are still alienated. When the Bastard seeks to rally John and condemns the overtures for peace, John delegates power to him in arms. Meanwhile the Dauphin has refused to desist; the battle goes against the English and King John who, sick with a fever, retreats to the abbey at Swinstead. The Bastard alone, according to Salisbury, Pembroke and Bigot, holds the defense, and when they learn from the dying Count Melun that the Dauphin intends to deal treacherously with them, they decide to seek John. The French are forced to draw back because they lose a supply ship, but the Bastard discloses to Hubert that a mishap has also halved his forces. King John, Hubert tells him, has been poisoned by a monk, and in the final scene John dies, surrounded by the penitent lords, his heir Prince Henry, and the Bastard. The Bastard rallies the mourners: the Dauphin is suing for peace but, says the Bastard, he will sue more readily if he sees his opponents well prepared and resolute. He swears allegiance to Prince Henry and affirms England's determination to remain unconquered.

ACT V. SCENE I.

KING JOHN'S *palace.*

Enter KING JOHN, PANDULPH *with the crown, and* ATTENDANTS:

KING JOHN.

Thus have I yielded up into your hand
The circle[1] of my glory.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Take again [*Giving back the crown.*
From this my hand, as holding of the Pope[2]
Your sovereign greatness and authority.

KING JOHN.

Now keep your holy word: go meet the French;
And from his holiness use all your power
To stop their marches 'fore[3] we are inflamed.
Our discontented counties[4] do revolt;
Our people quarrel with obedience;
Swearing allegiance and the love of soul[5]
To stranger[6] blood, to foreign royalty.
This inundation of mistemper'd humour[7]
Rests by you[8] only to be qualified:[9]
Then pause not; for the present time's so sick,
That present[10] medicine must be minister'd,
Or overthrow incurable ensues.

---

[1] **circle:** crown. [2] **as holding of the Pope:** that holds it from the Pope. [3] **'fore:** before. [4] **counties:** members of the nobility. [5] **the love of soul:** loyalty. [6] **stranger:** alien. [7] **mistemper'd humour:** the humors were blood, phlegm, melancholy, and choler, and it was believed that if these humors were out of proportion, a person would become ill. [8] **Rests by you:** depends upon you. [9] **qualified:** moderated. [10] **present:** immediate.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

It was my breath that blew this tempest up,
Upon[1] your stubborn usage of the Pope:
But since you are a gentle convertite,[2]
My tongue shall hush again this storm of war,
And make fair weather in your blustering land.
On this Ascension-day, remember well,
Upon your oath of service to the Pope,
Go I to make the French lay down their arms. [*Exit.*

KING JOHN.

Is this Ascension-day? Did not the prophet
Say, that before Ascension-day at noon
My crown I should give off? [3] Even so I have:
I did suppose it should be on constraint;[4]
But, heaven be thankt, it is but voluntary.

Enter BASTARD.

BASTARD.

All Kent hath yielded; nothing there holds out
But Dover Castle: London hath received,
Like a kind host, the Dauphin and his powers:
Your nobles will not hear you, but are gone
To offer service to your enemy;
And wild amazement[5] hurries up and down
The little[6] number of your doubtful [7] friends.

KING JOHN.

Would not my lords return to me again,
After they heard young Arthur was alive?

BASTARD.

They found him dead, and cast into the streets;
An empty casket, where the jewel of life
By some damn'd hand was robb'd and ta'en away.

---

[1] **Upon:** because of. [2] **convertite:** a person converted to the religious life. [3] **give off:** relinquish. [4] **constraint:** compulsion. [5] **amazement:** confusion; distraction. [6] **little:** small. [7] **doubtful:** doubting.

KING JOHN.

That villain Hubert told me he did live.

BASTARD.

So, on my soul, he did, for aught he knew.
But wherefore do you droop? why look you sad?
Be great in act, as you have been in thought;
Let not the world see fear and sad distrust[1]
Govern the motion of a kingly eye:
Be stirring as the time; be fire with fire;
Threaten the threatener, and outface[2] the brow
Of bragging[3] horror: so shall inferior eyes,
That borrow their behaviours from the great,
Grow great by your example, and put on
The dauntless spirit of resolution.
Away, and glister[4] like the god of war,
When he intendeth to become[5] the field:
Show boldness and aspiring confidence.
What, shall they seek the lion in his den,
And fright him there? and make him tremble there?
O, let it not be said!—Forage,[6] and run
To meet displeasure further from the doors,
And grapple with him ere he come so nigh.

KING JOHN.

The legate of the Pope hath been with me,
And I have made a happy[7] peace with him;
And he hath promised to dismiss the powers[8]
Led by the Dauphin.

BASTARD.

O inglorious league!
Shall we, upon the footing of our land,[9]
Send fair-play orders,[10] and make compromise,
Insinuation,[11] parley, and base truce,
To arms invasive? shall a beardless boy,

---

[1] sad distrust: unhappy thoughts of the outcome. [2] outface: stare down. [3] bragging: vaunting. [4] glister: glisten. [5] become: grace; adorn. [6] Forage: range abroad. [7] happy: favorable. [8] powers: army. [9] upon the footing of our land: upon their standing on our land. [10] fair-play orders: friendly stipulations (according to the terms of chivalry). [11] Insinuation: try to curry favor.

A cocker'd [1] silken wanton,[2] brave[3] our fields,
And flesh[4] his spirit in a warlike soil,
Mocking the air with colours idly[5] spread,
And find no check? [6] Let us, my liege, to arms:
Perchance the cardinal cannot make your peace,
Or if he do, let it at least be said
They saw we had a purpose of defence.

KING JOHN.

Have thou the ordering of this present time.

BASTARD.

Away, then, with good courage! yet, I know,
Our party may well meet a prouder foe.[7] [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Near St. Edmund's-Bury. The French camp.

Enter, in arms, LOUIS, SALISBURY, MELUN, PEMBROKE, BIGOT, *and* SOLDIERS.

LOUIS.

My Lord Melun, let this be copied out,
And keep it safe for our remembrance:
Return the precedent[8] to these lords again;
That, having our fair order[9] written down,
Both they and we, perusing o'er these notes,
May know wherefore we took the sacrament,
And keep our faiths firm and inviolable.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Upon our sides it never shall be broken.
And, noble Dauphin, albeit we swear
A voluntary zeal and unurged faith
To your proceedings; yet, believe me, prince,
I am not glad that such a sore of time
Should seek a plaster[10] by contemn'd revolt,[11]

---

[1] **cocker'd**: pampered. [2] **wanton**: effeminate boy brought up in luxury. [3] **brave**: defy. [4] **flesh**: initiate in blood (make eager for combat). [5] **idly**: carelessly. [6] **check**: rebuke; resistance. [7] **yet . . . foe**: yet I know our party is fully able to meet a more valiant foe. [8] **precedent**: original. [9] **order**: terms of agreement. [10] **plaster**: medical dressing or bandage. [11] **contemn'd revolt**: despised revolution.

And heal the inveterate canker of one wound
By making many. O, it grieves my soul,
That I must draw this metal from my side
To be a widow-maker! O, and there
Where honourable rescue and defence
Cries out upon the name of Salisbury!
But such is the infection of the time,
That, for the health and physic[1] of our right,
We cannot deal but with the very hand
Of stern injustice and confused wrong.
And is't not pity, O my grieved friends,
That we, the sons and children of this isle,
Were born to see so sad an hour as this;
Wherein we step after a stranger, march
Upon her gentle bosom, and fill up
Her enemies' ranks,—I must withdraw and weep
Upon the spot[2] of this enforced cause,—
To grace[3] the gentry of a land remote,
And follow unacquainted colours[4] here?
What, here? O nation, that thou couldst remove![5]
That Neptune's arms, who clippeth[6] thee about,
Would bear thee from the knowledge of thyself,[7]
And grapple thee unto a pagan shore;
Where these two Christian armies might combine
The blood of malice in a vein of league,[8]
And not to spend it so unneighbourly!

LOUIS.

A noble temper dost thou show in this;
And great affections wrestling in thy bosom
Do make an earthquake of nobility.
O, what a noble combat hast thou fought
Between compulsion and a brave respect!
Let me wipe off this honourable dew[9]

---

[1] physic: treatment. [2] Upon the spot: against the stain or disgrace. [3] To grace: be gracious to. [4] unacquainted colours: foreign flags. [5] remove: go somewhere else. [6] clippeth: embraces; surrounds. [7] bear . . . thyself: bear or carry you without your knowing it. [8] in a vein of league: in one vein (blood vessel) of alliance, for Christian purposes (crusading). [9] dew: tears.

That silverly doth progress on thy cheeks:
My heart hath melted at a lady's tears,
Being an ordinary inundation;
But this effusion of such manly drops,
This shower, blown up by tempest of the soul,
Startles mine eyes, and makes me more amazed
Than had I seen the vaulty top of heaven
Figured quite o'er[1] with burning meteors.
Lift up thy brow, renowned Salisbury,
And with a great heart heave away this storm:
Commend [2] these waters to those baby eyes
That never saw the giant world enraged;
Nor met with fortune other than at feasts,
Full of warm blood,[3] of mirth, of gossiping.
Come, come; for thou shalt thrust thy hand as deep
Into the purse of rich prosperity
As Louis himself:—so, nobles, shall you all,
That knit your sinews to the strength of mine.—
And even there, methinks, an angel spake:[4]
Look, where the holy legate comes apace,
To give us warrant from the hand of heaven,
And on our actions set the name of right
With holy breath.

Enter PANDULPH, *attended.*

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Hail, noble Prince of France!
The next[5] is this,—King John hath reconciled
Himself to Rome; his spirit is come in,[6]
That so stood out against the holy church,
The great metropolis and see of Rome:
Therefore thy threatening colours now wind up;
And tame the savage spirit of wild war,

---

[1] **Figured quite o'er:** patterned all over. [2] **Commend:** entrust; leave. [3] **Full of warm blood:** warm with hospitality. [4] **an angel spake:** a reference to the trumpet call announcing Pandulph's approach; some authorities think there is a tie-in here with "rich prosperity," and this is a pun on the coin *angel.* [5] **The next:** what follows; the latest news. [6] **is come in:** has submitted.

That, like a lion foster'd-up at hand,[1]
It may lie gently at the foot of peace,
And be no further harmful than in show.[2]

LOUIS.

Your Grace shall [3] pardon me, I will not back:[4]
I am too high-born to be propertied,[5]
To be a secondary at control,[6]
Or useful serving-man, and instrument,
To any sovereign state throughout the world.
Your breath first kindled the dead coal of wars
Between this chastised kingdom and myself,
And brought in matter that should feed this fire;
And now 'tis far too huge to be blown out
With that same weak wind which enkindled it.
You taught me how to know the face of right,
Acquainted me with interest[7] to this land,
Yea, thrust this enterprise into my heart;
And come ye now to tell me John hath made
His peace with Rome? What is that peace to me?
I, by the honour of my marriage-bed,
After young Arthur, claim this land for mine;
And, now it is half-conquer'd, must I back
Because that[8] John hath made his peace with Rome?
Am I Rome's slave? What penny hath Rome borne,
What men provided, what munition sent,
To underprop[9] this action? Is't not I
That undergo this charge? [10] who else but I,
And such as to my claim are liable,[11]
Sweat in this business and maintain this war?
Have I not heard these islanders shout out,
Vive le roil as I have bankt[12] their towns?

---

[1] **foster'd-up at hand:** raised in captivity; reared by hand. [2] **show:** appearance. [3] **shall:** must. [4] **back:** go back. [5] **propertied:** used as someone else's instrument for a particular purpose. [6] **secondary at control:** a subordinate under the control of others. [7] **interest:** a claim. [8] **Because that:** because. [9] **underprop:** support. [10] **charge:** expense. [11] **liable:** subject. [12] **bankt:** sailed along the riverbanks.

Have I not here the best cards for the game,
To win this easy match[1] play'd for a crown?
And shall I now give o'er the yielded set? [2]
No, no, on my soul, it never shall be said.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

You look but on the outside of this work.

LOUIS.

Outside or inside, I will not return
Till my attempt so much be glorified
As to my ample hope was promised
Before I drew this gallant head of war,[3]
And cull'd [4] these fiery spirits from the world,
To outlook[5] conquest, and to win renown
Even in the jaws of danger and of death.—
[*Trumpet sounds.*
What lusty trumpet thus doth summon us?

Enter BASTARD, *attended.*

BASTARD.

According to the fair-play[6] of the world,
Let me have audience; I am sent to speak:—
My holy lord of Milan, from the king
I come, to learn how you have dealt for him;
And, as you answer,[7] I do know the scope
And warrant limited unto my tongue.[8]

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

The Dauphin is too wilful-opposite,[9]
And will not temporize[10] with my entreaties;
He flatly says he'll not lay down his arms.

BASTARD.

By all the blood that ever fury breathed,
The youth says well.—Now hear our English king;
For thus his royalty doth speak in me.
He is prepared; and reason too he should:

---

[1] **match:** contest. [2] **set:** game (a term in cards and also in tennis). [3] **head of war:** armed force. [4] **cull'd:** selected. [5] **outlook:** face *down.* [6] ***fair-play:*** accepted rules governing warfare. [7] **as you answer:** judging by the way you answer. [8] **I do know the scope tongue:** I shall know just how far I am allowed to go in what I say. [9] **wilful-opposite:** stubbornly opposed. [10] **temporize:** come to terms.

This apish and unmannerly approach,
This harness'd mask[1] and unadvised revel,
This unhair'd[2] sauciness and boyish troops,
The king doth smile at; and is well prepared
To whip this dwarfish war, these pigmy arms,
From out the circle of his territories.
That hand which had the strength, even at your door,
To cudgel you, and make you take the hatch;[3]
To dive, like buckets, in concealed wells;
To crouch in litter[4] of your stable planks;
To lie, like pawns,[5] lockt up in chests and trunks;
To hug with swine, to seek sweet safety out
In vaults and prisons; and to thrill[6] and shake
Even at the crying of your nation's crow,[7]
Thinking his voice an armed Englishman;—
Shall that victorious hand be feebled here,
That in your chambers gave you chastisement?
No: know the gallant monarch is in arms;
And, like an eagle o'er his aery,[8] towers,
To souse[9] annoyance that comes near his nest.—
And you degenerate, you ingrate revolts,
You bloody Neroes, ripping up the womb
Of your dear mother England, blush for shame;
For your own ladies and pale-visaged maids,
Like Amazons, come tripping after drums,
Their thimbles into armed gauntlets change,
Their needles to lances, and their gentle hearts
To fierce and bloody inclination.

LOUIS.

There end thy brave,[10] and turn thy face in peace;
We grant thou canst outscold us: fare thee well;
We hold our time too precious to be spent
With such a brabbler.[11]

---

[1] harness'd mask: disguise for defense. [2] unhair'd: beardless. [3] take the hatch: jump over the half-door; that is, an irregular mode of entering. [4] litter: stretcher carried by poles. [5] pawns: pawned articles. [6] thrill: tremble with fear. [7] nation's crow: Gallic cock, which symbolized France. [8] aery: eagle's brood. [9] souse: swoop down upon. [10] brave: boasting; bravado. [11] brabbler: brawler.

CARDINAL PANDULPH.

Give me leave to speak.

BASTARD.

No, I will speak.

LOUIS.

We will attend to neither.—
Strike up the drums; and let the tongue of war
Plead for our interest and our being here.

BASTARD.

Indeed, your drums, being beaten, will cry out;
And so shall you, being beaten: do but[1] start
An echo with the clamour of thy drum,
And even at hand a drum is ready braced [2]
That shall reverberate all [3] as loud as thine;
Sound but another, and another shall,
As loud as thine, rattle the welkin's ear,[4]
And mock the deep-mouth'd thunder: for at hand—
Not trusting to this halting[5] legate here,
Whom he hath used rather for sport than need—
Is warlike John; and in his forehead sits
A bare-ribb'd death, whose office[6] is this day
To feast upon whole thousands of the French.

LOUIS.

Strike up our drums, to find [7] this danger out.

BASTARD.

And thou shalt find it, Dauphin, do not doubt. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

The field of battle.

Alarums. Enter KING JOHN *and* HUBERT.

KING JOHN.

How goes the day with us? O, tell me, Hubert.

---

[1] **do but:** if you even. [2] **braced:** stretched taut. [3] **all:** fully. [4] **rattle the welkin's ear:** assail the sky (or heavens) with noise. [5] **halting:** dilatory. [6] **office:** function. [7] **find:** search.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Badly, I fear. How fares your majesty?

KING JOHN.

This fever, that hath troubled me so long,
Lies heavy on me;—O, my heart is sick!

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

My lord, your valiant kinsman, Faulconbridge,
Desires your majesty to leave the field,
And send him word by me which way you go.

KING JOHN.

Tell him, toward Swinstead,[1] to the abbey there.

MESSENGER.

Be of good comfort; for the great supply,[2]
That was expected by the Dauphin here,
Are wrackt[3] three nights ago on Goodwin Sands.[4]
This news was brought to Richard but even now:
The French fight coldly,[5] and retire themselves.[6]

KING JOHN.

Ay me, this tyrant[7] fever burns me up,
And will not let me welcome this good news!—
Set on toward Swinstead: to my litter straight;
Weakness possesseth me, and I am faint. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

Another part of the field.

Enter SALISBURY, PEMBROKE, *and* BIGOT.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

I did not think the king so stored[8] with friends.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Up once again; put spirit in the French:
If they miscarry,[9] we miscarry too.

---

[1] **Swinstead:** Swineshead, near Spalding, in Lincolnshire. [2] **supply:** reinforcements. [3] **wrackt:** wrecked; shipwrecked. [4] **Goodwin Sands:** shoals in the Straits of Dover. [5] **coldly:** without heart. [6] **retire themselves:** retreat. [7] **tyrant:** merciless. [8] **stored:** well supplied. [9] **miscarry:** come to grief.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

That misbegotten devil, Faulconbridge,
In spite of spite,[1] alone upholds the day.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

They say King John sore-sick[2] hath left the field.

Enter MELUN, *wounded.*

MELUN.

Lead me to the revolts[3] of England here.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

When we were happy we had other names.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

It is the Count Melun.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Wounded to death.

MELUN.

Fly, noble English, you are bought and sold;[4]
Unthread the rude eye[5] of rebellion,
And welcome home again discarded faith.
Seek out King John, and fall before his feet;
For if the French be lords of this loud day,
He[6] means to recompense[7] the pains you take
By cutting off your heads: thus hath he sworn,
And I with him, and many moe[8] with me,
Upon the altar at Saint Edmund's-Bury;
Even on that altar where we swore to you
Dear amity and everlasting love.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

May this be possible? may this be true?

MELUN.

Have I not hideous death within my view,
Retaining but a quantity[9] of life,
Which bleeds away, even as a form of wax[10]
Resolveth[11] from his figure 'gainst the fire?

---

[1] **In spite of spite:** in defiance of disaster. [2] **sore-sick:** gravely ill. [3] **revolts:** rebels. [4] **bought and sold:** an expression for foul play. [5] **rude eye:** rough path (likened to the eye of a needle.) [6] **He:** the Dauphin. [7] **recompense:** reward. [8] **moe:** more. [9] **quantity:** small piece. [10] **a form of wax:** a wax figure to be pierced or burned. [11] **Resolveth:** melts.

What in the world should make me now deceive,
Since I must lose the use of all deceit?
Why should I, then, be false, since it is true
That I must die here, and live hence by truth?
I say again, if Louis do win the day,
He is forsworn, if e'er those eyes of yours
Behold another day break in the east:
But even this night,—whose black contagious[1] breath
Already smokes about the burning crest
Of the old, feeble, and day-wearied sun,—
Even this ill night, your breathing shall expire,
Paying the fine[2] of rated[3] treachery
Even with a treacherous fine[4] of all your lives,
If Louis by your assistance win the day.
Commend me to one Hubert, with your king:
The love of him,—and this respect[5] besides,
For that my grandsire was an Englishman,—
Awakes my conscience to confess all this.
In lieu whereof, I pray you, bear me hence
From forth the noise and rumour[6] of the field;
Where I may think the remnant of my thoughts
In peace, and part this body and my soul
With contemplation and devout desires.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

We do believe thee:—and beshrew[7] my soul
But I do love the favour and the form[8]
Of this most fair occasion, by the which
We will untread[9] the steps of damned flight;
And, like a bated and retired[10] flood,
Leaving our rankness[11] and irregular course,
Stoop low within those bounds we have o'erlookt,[12]

---

[1] contagious: infectious. [2] fine: penalty. [3] rated: appraised. [4] fine: end. [5] respect: consideration. [6] rumour: tumult; din. [7] beshrew: a curse upon. [8] favour and the form: appearance. [9] untread: retrace. [10] bated and retired: diminished and retreated. [11] rankness: fullness. [12] o'erlookt: overflowed.

And calmly run on in obedience,
Even to our ocean, to our great King John.—
My arm shall give thee help to bear thee hence;
For I do see the cruel pangs of death
Right[1] in thine eye.—Away, my friends! New flight;
And happy newness,[2] that intends old right.

[*Exeunt, leading off* MELUN.

SCENE V.

The French camp.

Enter LOUIS *and his* TRAIN.

LOUIS.

The sun of heaven methought was loth to set,
But stay'd, and made the western welkin blush,
When th'English[3] measure backward [4] their own ground
In faint retire.[5] O, bravely came we off,
When with a volley of our needless shot,
After such bloody toil, we bid good night;
And wound our tottering[6] colours clearly[7] up,
Last in the field, and almost lords of it!

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

Where is my prince, the Dauphin?

LOUIS.

Here:—what news?

MESSENGER.

The Count Melun is slain; the English lords,

---

[1] **Right:** immediate. [2] **happy newness:** propitious change. [3] **English:** Englishmen. [4] **measure backward:** traverse. [5] **faint retire:** timid or cowardly retreat. [6] **tottering:** tattered. [7] **clearly:** completely; *cheerfully* may have been intended here.

By his persuasion, are again fall'n off;[1]
And your supply, which you have wisht[2] so long,
Are cast away[3] and sunk on Goodwin Sands.

LOUIS.

Ah, foul shrewd [4] news!—beshrew thy very heart!—
I did not think to be so sad to-night
As this hath made me.—Who was he that said
King John did fly an hour or two before
The stumbling night[5] did part our weary powers?

MESSENGER.

Whoever spoke it, it is true, my lord.

LOUIS.

Well; keep good quarter and good care[6] to-night:
The day shall not be up so soon as I,
To try the fair adventure of to-morrow. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

An open place near Swinstead Abbey.

Enter BASTARD *and* HUBERT, *severally.*

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Who's there? speak, ho! speak quickly, or I shoot.

BASTARD.

A friend.—What art thou?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Of the part of England.

BASTARD.

Whither dost thou go?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

What's that to thee? Why may not I demand
Of thine affairs, as well as thou of mine?

BASTARD.

Hubert, I think?

---

[1] **are again fall'n off:** have again deserted. [2] **wisht:** wished for. [3] **cast away:** wrecked. [4] **shrewd:** bitter; piercing. [5] **stumbling night:** night that causes stumbling. [6] **keep good quarter and good care:** guard the posts assigned to you carefully.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Thou hast a perfect[1] thought:
I will, upon all hazards,[2] well believe
Thou art my friend, thou know'st my tongue so well.
Who art thou?

BASTARD.

Who thou wilt: an if thou please,
Thou mayst befriend me so much as to think
I come one way of the Plantagenets.[3]

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Unkind remembrance! [4] thou and eyeless night[5]
Have done me shame:—brave soldier, pardon me,
That any accent[6] breaking from thy tongue
Should scape[7] the true acquaintance of mine ear.

BASTARD.

Comé, come; sans compliment,[8] what news abroad?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Why, here walk I, in the black brow of night,
To find you out.

BASTARD.

Brief,[9] then; and what's the news?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

O, my sweet sir, news fitting to the night,—
Black, fearful, comfortless, and horrible.

BASTARD.

Show me the very wound of this ill news:
I am no woman, I'll not swound [10] at it.

HUBERT DE BURGH.

The king, I fear, is poison'd by a monk:
I left him almost speechless; and broke out[11]
To acquaint you with this evil, that you might
The better arm you to the sudden time,[12]
Than if you had at leisure[13] known of this.

---

[1] perfect: correct. [2] hazards: chances. [3] I come . . . Plantagenets: I am a Plantagenet on one side; that is, he is half-Plantagenet. [4] remembrance: reminder. [5] eyeless night: a night without stars. [6] accent: word. [7] scape: escape. [8] sans compliment: without flattery. [9] Brief: briefly. [10] swound: swoon; faint. [11] broke out: rushed out. [12] sudden time: unexpected turn of events, [13] at leisure: after some delay.

BASTARD.

How did he take it? who did taste[1] to him?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

A monk, I tell you; a resolved [2] villain,
Whose bowels suddenly burst out: the king
Yet speaks, and peradventure[3] may recover.

BASTARD.

Who didst thou leave to tend his majesty?

HUBERT DE BURGH.

Why, know you not the lords are all come back,
And brought Prince Henry in their company?
At whose request the king hath pardon'd them,
And they are all about his majesty.

BASTARD.

Withhold thine indignation, mighty heaven,
And tempt us not to bear above our power! [4]—
I'll tell thee, Hubert, half my power this night,
Passing these flats,[5] are taken by the tide,—
These Lincoln Washes[6] have devoured them;
Myself, well-mounted, hardly[7] have escaped.
Away, before! conduct me to the king;
I doubt[8] he will be dead or e'er[9] I come. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.

The orchard of Swinstead Abbey.

Enter PRINCE HENRY, SALISBURY, *and* BIGOT.

PRINCE HENRY.

It is too late: the life of all his blood
Is toucht corruptibly;[10] and his pure[11] brain—
Which some suppose the soul's frail dwelling-house—

---

[1] **taste:** act as taster, as was the custom with kings. [2] **resolved:** resolute; determined. [3] **peradventure:** perhaps. [4] **tempt . . . power:** do not test us with something that we cannot accomplish. [5] **flats:** tidal flats. [6] **Lincoln Washes:** the Wash, a large inlet between Lincolnshire and Norfolk. [7] **hardly:** barely. [8] **doubt:** fear. [9] **or e'er:** before. [10] **toucht corruptibly:** infected to the point of corruption. [11] **pure:** fine.

Doth, by the idle[1] comments that it makes,
Foretell the ending of mortality.[2]

Enter PEMBROKE.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

His highness yet doth speak; and holds belief
That, being brought into the open air,
It would allay the burning quality
Of that fell [3] poison which assaileth him.

PRINCE HENRY.

Let him be brought into the orchard here.—
Doth he still rage? [4] [*Exit* BIGOT.

EARL OF PEMBROKE.

He is more patient
Than when you left him; even now he sung.

PRINCE HENRY.

O vanity of sickness! fierce extremes
In their continuance[5] will not feel themselves.
Death, having prey'd upon the outward parts,
Leaves them invisible; and his siege is now
Against the mind, the which he pricks and wounds
With many legions of strange fantasies,
Which, in their throng and press[6] to that last hold,[7]
Confound themselves.[8] 'Tis strange that death should sing.—
I am the cygnet to this pale faint swan,[9]
Who chants a doleful hymn to his own death,
And from the organ-pipe of frailty sings
His soul and body to their lasting rest.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Be of good comfort, prince; for you are born
To set a form upon that indigest[10]
Which he hath left so shapeless and so rude.[11]

KING JOHN *brought in.*

---

[1] idle: foolish. [2] mortality: human life. [3] fell: fierce; cruel. [4] rage: rave. [5] In their continuance: if they continue. [6] throng and press: tumult and hurry. [7] hold: stronghold. [8] Confound themselves: destroy one another. [9] cygnet . . . swan: an allusion to the old belief that a swan sings before it dies. [10] indigest: shapeless mass, or confusion. [11] so rude: in such a rough form.

KING JOHN.

Ay, marry, now my soul hath elbow-room;
It would not out at windows nor at doors.
There is so hot a summer in my bosom,
That all my bowels crumble up to dust:
I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen
Upon a parchment; and against this fire
Do I shrink up.

PRINCE HENRY.

How fares your majesty?

KING JOHN.

Poison'd,—ill fare;[1]—dead, forsook, cast off:
And none of you will bid the winter come,
To thrust his icy fingers in my maw;[2]
Nor let my kingdom's rivers take their course
Through my burn'd bosom; nor entreat the north
To make his bleak winds kiss my parched lips,
And comfort me with cold:—I do not ask you much,
I beg cold comfort; and you are so strait,[3]
And so ingrateful, you deny me that.

PRINCE HENRY.

O, that there were some virtue in my tears,
That might relieve you!

KING JOHN.

The salt in them is hot.—
Within me is a hell; and there the poison
Is, as a fiend, confined to tyrannize
On unreprievable[4] condemned blood.

Enter BASTARD.

BASTARD.

O, I am scalded [5] with my violent motion,
And spleen of speed [6] to see your majesty!

---

[1] **fare:** fortune, with a pun on *fare* as food.
[2] **maw:** stomach.
[3] **strait:** niggardly; stingy.
[4] **unreprievable:** not capable of reprieve.
[5] **scalded:** bathed in hot perspiration.
[6] **spleen of speed:** eager or violent haste.

KING JOHN.

O cousin, thou art come to set[1] mine eye:
The tackle[2] of my heart is crackt and burn'd;
And all the shrouds,[3] wherewith my life should sail,
Are turned to one thread, one little hair:
My heart hath one poor string to stay it by,
Which holds but till thy news be uttered;
And then all this thou see'st is but a clod,
And module[4] of confounded[5] royalty.

BASTARD.

The Dauphin is preparing hitherward,
Where heaven he knows how we shall answer him;
For in a night the best part of my power,
As I upon advantage[6] did remove,
Were in the Washes all unwarily[7]
Devoured by the unexpected flood. [KING JOHN *dies.*

EARL OF SALISBURY.

You breathe these dead news[8] in as dead an ear.—
My liege! my lord!—but now a king,—now thus.

PRINCE HENRY.

Even so must I run on,[9] and even so stop.
What surety of[10] the world, what hope, what stay,[11]
When this was now a king, and now is clay?

BASTARD.

Art thou gone so? I do but stay behind
To do the office for thee of revenge,
And then my soul shall wait on thee to heaven,
As it on earth hath been thy servant still.—[12]
Now, now, you stars that move in your right spheres,[13]

---

[1] **set:** close. [2] **tackle:** equipment for managing a ship. [3] ***shrouds:*** *ropes* for holding masts in place (continuing the image of a ship in his dying). [4] **module:** image; mold. [5] **confounded:** destroyed. [6] **advantage:** favorable opportunity. [7] **unwarily:** without warning. [8] **these dead news:** this deadly news. [9] **run on:** live. [10] **surety of:** certainty in. [11] **stay:** support. [12] **still:** always. [13] ***you stars . . . spheres:*** that is, the noblemen who have returned to their rightful stations in life.

Where be your powers? [1] show now your mended faiths;[2]
And instantly return with me again,
To push destruction and perpetual shame
Out of the weak door of our fainting land.
Straight[3] let us seek, or straight we shall be sought;
The Dauphin rages at our very heels.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

It seems you know not, then, so much as we:
The Cardinal Pandulph is within at rest,
Who half an hour since came from the Dauphin,
And brings from him such offers of our peace
As we with honour and respect may take,
With purpose presently to leave this war.

BASTARD.

He will the rather[4] do it when he sees
Ourselves well sinewed [5] to our defence.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

Nay, it is in a manner done already;
For many carriages[6] he hath dispatcht
To the sea-side, and put[7] his cause and quarrel
To the disposing[8] of the cardinal:
With whom yourself, myself, and other lords,
If you think meet,[9] this afternoon will post[10]
To consummate this business happily.

BASTARD.

Let it be so:—and you, my noble prince,
With other princes that may best be spared,
Shall wait upon[11] your father's funeral.

PRINCE HENRY.

At Worcester must his body be interr'd;
For so he will'd it.

---

[1] **powers:** armies. [2] **mended faiths:** restored loyalty. [3] **straight:** immediately. [4] **the rather:** more willingly. [5] **sinewed:** strengthened. [6] **carriages:** wagons with equipment. [7] **put:** submitted. [8] **disposing:** disposal, direction. [9] **meet:** fitting; suitable. [10] **post:** set out in haste. [11] **wait upon:** act as escort for.

BASTARD.

Thither shall it, then:
And happily may your sweet self put on
The lineal state[1] and glory of the land!
To whom, with all submission, on my knee,
I do bequeath[2] my faithful services
And true subjection everlastingly.

EARL OF SALISBURY.

And the like tender[3] of our love we make,
To rest without a spot[4] for evermore.

PRINCE HENRY.

I have a kind soul that would give you thanks,
And knows not how to do it but with tears.

BASTARD.

O, let us pay the time but needful woe,[5]
Since it hath been beforehand with our griefs.—
This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world[6] in arms,
And we shall shock them;[7] naught shall make us rue,[8]
If England to itself do rest but true. [*Exeunt.*

---

[1] **lineal state:** directly inherited chair of state (throne). [2] **bequeath:** transfer. [3] **the like tender:** the same offer. [4] **spot:** stain. [5] **pay . . . woe:** indulge in no more than necessary mourning (for the death of a king). [6] **the three corners of the world:** that is, the rest of the known world, England being the fourth corner. [7] **shock them:** throw them into confusion. [8] **rue:** regret the day.

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